

THE GENIUS



MARGARET POTTER

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THE GENIUS

BY

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"THE HOUSE OF DE MAILLY" "ISTAR OF BABYLON"
ETC. ETC.



LONDON AND NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1906

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Published March, 1906.

TO
MY BROTHER
EDWARD CLEMENT POTTER

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THEMA

Hark, ye Great, that withdraw yourselves from the Multitude! *Loneliness* is written for your word. Alone shall ye strive to solve the riddle of Creation.

Seek ye help of them that have gone before? Ye shall find it not. Dream ye of sympathy, of praise, from those that watch your work to-day? They shall give ye rather mockery. Finally, would ye leave to your children legacies of wisdom that shall be as gold unto them? Lo! Such desire, also, must be vain.

Dowered of Vision, Power or Wantonness, ye shall not escape this scourge of Fate. Alone shall ye cut your way through the rock of Destiny up to the High Place of Restitution. Yea! Solitary shall your labor be. But out of solitude cometh, in good time, that Understanding of the Law that all, at last, must seek—and find.

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PROLOGUE

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IN the Western world of the revised calendar it was the evening of January twelfth. In Russia it was New Year's night, of the year 1840. The year was twenty-three hours old; for the bells of the three churches in Klin had just chimed eleven times. But in "Maidonovo," a country-place of the Gregorievs just outside the town, the mistress of the house, Princess Sophia, had not yet gone to bed. She had been alone in her bedroom for some time, and was now on her knees before a little shrine presided over by a great, golden ikon, with its flaring colors, and stiff, Byzantine figures of Mary and the infant Christ. There, before the World-Mother, knelt the loneliest of unhappy women: daughter of an old, impoverished Muscovite house, and wife, by necessity, of Michael Gregoriev, a man of millions, chief of the Third Section in Moscow: an official after the heart of the Iron Czar, and of Satan, his master, too.

For nearly an hour the Princess had knelt on a heavily rugged floor, her eyes lifted to the face of the Virgin, her lips revealing, in those whispers that had become part of her life, the ever-living anguish of her heart. She was in her thirty-third year, poor creature: had known now sixteen years of married life—sixteen

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years of revelation, of repulsion mental and physical, of misery not to be told. One by one her little illusions, fancies, hopes, and, with them, all the graces of her youth, had fallen from her, till there remained but a shadowy, faded creature, holding, in the depths of her bruised soul, just one more desire, one final hope, of which the very possibility was by this time all but extinguished.

Yet it was of this hope she was speaking to-night to that distant, shadowy Mary, who, her confessor had told her, can always understand and always pity. Here, in the chill silence of her lonely rooms, while the wide world without grew stiller and more still under its pale covering, the wife had gathered her last resolution together, and dared a demand of those High Immortals whose contact with humanity had ended so long ago. They had hitherto been pitiless enough with her; though this she would scarcely acknowledge even in her feeble rebellion. But she should ask them, at last, to make her a tardy restitution.

Sophia was unaware that her wish was a selfish one. It seemed so natural a thing she asked; and her mind, poor lady, was all upon herself, there being no other soul to think for her. That the helpless life she longed for would be ushered into a dreary world, too dark for bright innocence to face, never occurred to her. Her outlook had grown strangely one-sided during the past long years of constantly weakening defence.

"Mary-Mother — protect me! I have waited very long. I have done all Thy will. I have kept the fasts: have made my confessions and been absolved. I have striven so long for strength to endure—all that has been given me to endure! I have not avoided any pain, or abuse, or disgrace. I have borne without complaint all the isolation of *his* life, till my very family shuns me. Oh, Thy hand has lain heavy upon me, but I have not

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complained! Therefore, in this New Year, I come to Thee, Holy Mother, with my wish. Grant me, I beseech, that which has been given so many times to others! Give me at last a companion in my life: one that cannot leave me. Thou, holiest of women, intercede for me! Make me one with Thee! Give me, too, a child!"

Once more, and over and over again, did the frail woman make her request: so many times, indeed, and at last so fervidly, that her excitement grew, and tears came. Little by little she drooped towards the floor. Her face shone wet in the candle-light; and she clutched at the little shelf below the ikon, where a handful of flowers stood in a silver vase between the candles.

The minutes crept by. The few other lights in the big room burned low, flared, flickered, and went out. There was a vast, muffled stillness in the snow-filled air. The first night of the New Year was nearly dead. As the light in her room grew ghostlier, Princess Sophia's voice became gradually incoherent, dropped to a vague whisper, and finally ceased. She slid gently from her knees to a sitting posture, her head resting against the wall, under the little shrine. And then her eyes fell shut. . She slept.

For a quarter of an hour there was no sound in the room. The last candle before the ikon at length followed the others, wavered high for an instant, and then went out. Yet, strangely, the room was not left in darkness. On the contrary, in the corner by the door had appeared a soft, misty radiance which, second by second, grew visibly more luminous. Far over the snow-fields came the clear chime of bells, ringing the midnight hour. As their echoes died, the Princess, without moving her body, opened her eyes again upon the form of a woman who had emerged from the mist and now stood near at hand, looking down at her.

Tall she was, and classically robed, this visitor. Her

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face, shaded by a drapery of dove blue, was as fair as sculptured marble. But there was a fire of deep compassion in her dark eyes, and her mouth was curved into the gentlest smile. The great pity in that wonderful face stirred Sophia with a sudden pang of joy; and it was long before her gaze moved from those features. But when they did, her lips parted in a faint cry; for she saw that the Mary-Mother was not alone. Her left hand was clasped by that of a child: a tiny, shadowy shape, sweet-faced and slender-limbed. Looking, Sophia's breath came fast; and leaning forward instinctively, she held out her arms. At that gesture, the stranger and her charge came forward a little more, and the holy woman spoke:

"Sophia, I come to answer your prayer, bringing with me the soul of your child."

The Princess bowed to the floor.

"Your eyes behold a little, lonely spirit, that is to be given into your care. Guard it and guide it; for the way of its life stretches far, and is difficult and long. Your paths meet for but a few years: for you are yourself nearing the end of your unhappy journey; and during these last years, comfort shall be given you. Look, then, upon the face of your son."

Swiftly the little spirit left the protecting shadow of its holy guide, and paused beside Sophia. She would have clasped the shadowy body in her eager arms, but a sense outside herself forbade this, and she could only gaze searchingly into the gentle, childish face.

"Thou art mine?—my son?" she whispered, softly.

The little creature looked up at Mary-Mother and then, at once, returned to the sad mortal at its side. The little face brightened with a smile, and the lips formed the dear word, "Mother!"

Then, immediately, darkness had fallen. The visitors from afar were gone. Sophia lay upon the bare floor beneath the ikon, fast asleep.

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In a few moments the door from the hall opened hastily, and a woman's voice whispered in frightened haste:

"My lady! Khazyaeeka! His Excellency Prince Michael is coming up-stairs! He is almost here!"

CHAPTER I

THE CZAR'S BALL

AFTER the night of what she came gradually to call the Holy Dream, the years passed more swiftly, with less of inward tumult, for Sophia Ivanovna Gregoriev. It was now the close of the year 1851; and the reign of the Iron Czar was wavering towards its dark end. Meantime the son of the chief of the secret section in Moscow was eleven years and three months old: a straight-limbed, quiet child, the son of his mother. And all Sophia's recent life, that life which had entwined itself wholly about the promised babe, was mingled the inexplicable strangeness of her dream-memory. To her, New Year's night had become a sacred time; and she loved to keep a vigil through it in her own, lonely way. This year, however, it was to be marked in a different manner. For Michael Gregoriev had planned that, on the first night of 1852, he, and perforce his wife, should make a final effort to obtain that social recognition which had never been the accompaniment of his political advancement.

At this time—as, indeed, to-day, there stood, in the south-central part of trans-Moskva Moscow, only two private buildings of any note. One of these was the low-spreading palace of the Governor; the other that of Prince Michael Petrovitch Gregoriev. The first had stood in its gardens for a century and a half. The other was nearly fifty years older. The dwelling of the Gregorievs was at some distance from its stately neighbor, however; for it stood on the southeast corner of the

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Konnaia Square, approachable by carriage only through the Serpoukhovskaia. Its surroundings were of the humblest sort; for it was a long way south of the Merchants' quarter, and so far from the sacred precincts of the Kremlin that the voice of Ivan Veliki had melted into an echo ere it reached the Gregoriev gateway.

It is certain that neither age nor environment made this old place less grewsomely interesting: this ancient dwelling of a family whose unsavory annals were lost in the gloom of Tatar rule. The Gregorievs were closely bound to the gloomy stone pile; and would dwell there, in all probability, as long as their line continued. Michael, the present Prince, was loyal to his house. Yet its situation was one of the greatest of crosses to this man, who had known and cast away many a heavier burden during his career. Remote as he was from the fashionable districts, there was neither man nor woman in the city, from the proudest house in the Equerries' quarter to the outskirts of the Novaia Andronovka, but knew and shuddered, agreeably, at the Gregoriev reputation.

It was not strange, then, that the affair of New Year's night had become the sensation of the season. For on this night Prince Gregoriev had vowed a triumph over the massed society of the Mother City. He intended to accomplish now what his wedding with a daughter of one of the oldest and most honored families had failed to do: what no use of his unscrupulous power could force, what all Moscow society, for once banded unanimously together, had sworn he should never accomplish—enter their ranks, the ranks of the old nobility of the Empire.

By New Year's morning, however, the numbers were admitting, bitterly, their defeat. Once more Gregoriev was about to achieve the impossible. Eighteen years before, Moscow society had defeated him, superbly. At the time of his marriage to a daughter of the Blashkovs,

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the question of his admission into the "court circle" had been violently agitated. But at that time even his prospective father-in-law had not had the hardihood to suggest an informal presentation of this man to his Majesty. Nay, it was the bride, pale, pretty, sensitive Sophia, who, when it was seen that she had no slightest influence over her dread husband, had been, not, perhaps, without a sigh, dropped from their acquaintance by her former associates: nay, by her very family, all save one sister, a girl younger than herself.

For eighteen years, then, the Gregoriev palace had stood in its isolation, echoing only to the revelry that money can always obtain. For eighteen years its master, buying what the world had to sell, had been secretly planning to obtain what was not for sale: had faced, unmoved, an isolation which, to a nature less strong, would have been unbearable.

Now, at last, he was about to win. His amazing intrigue had succeeded. Its results were for the eyes of all men. For Moscow society had been suddenly *commanded* to his house, to a ball, given on New Year's night, in honor of his Imperial Majesty Nicholas I., who had decided, by his appearance, to honor the house of his subject and immediate servant.

It was eleven o'clock on that night of nights; and the bed and dressing rooms of the Princess Sophia were lighted to suffocation with smoking candles. Two maids and old Másha, general factotum of her mistress, were bustling importantly from one room to the other, bearing to her, piece by piece, their mistress's burden of jewels. At her dressing-table, pale, still wearing, as always in public, her mask of emotionless impenetrability, sat Sophia. Her neck and shoulders, which, according to the rigid etiquette of court-dress, were fully exposed, were white, and, considering her extreme slenderness,

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surprisingly round. A broad collar of sapphires and diamonds clasped above an Oriental necklace of pearls, successfully hid whatever there was to betray the too-visible marks of the "certain" age. On her head she bore the oddly becoming kakoshnik, which, in her case, was set with a triple row of superb diamonds. The face below this gleaming structure, the delicate, weary face, robbed of its customary frame of smoothly banded yellow hair, looked more sharply pointed than usual, but surprisingly pretty. For there was actually a fire—whether of pleasure, expectancy or nervousness—in her gray eyes; and there had come a delicate flush to the usually pallid cheeks. Sophia was, indeed, living with her dead to-night. Dreams of the old days held her in a kind of spell. The woman of memories—memories of a brief youth, a swiftly blighted flowering of life—had for once been forced back to a forgotten theme. And she found, recalling the days of her first balls, that the customary bitterness of contrast had suddenly disappeared. There was much that was new in this present situation: she was alive to sensations unfelt for years. There stirred in her heart what she was only to define after it had gone again: that which for most people forms the great staff of the inner life: on which she had been so long unaccustomed to lean—the great Phoenix, Hope.

At length they had fastened the last pin in her veil, the last hook in the heavy gown of cloth of silver. The maids stood off from her a little, whispering. But she herself remained motionless, gazing absently into her quaintly framed old mirror, lost in one of those reveries that her servants had learned not to disturb. The pause had lasted some five minutes when the door opening into the outer hall opened, vigorously, and the Princess started suddenly up, her face changing pathetically, a look of dread painfully contracting her features.

As their mistress rose, the three women shrank in-

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stinctively backward. To one understanding it, the act was pathetically familiar. An instant later, however, the Princess cried out, "Caroline! It is you, then?" and so turned deathly white and reeled a little till old Másha came to her support.

"Sophie! You are not ill — *to-night!*" The newcomer, who had spoken in French, halted near the door, an expression of dismay on her face.

Madame Gregoriev, however, laughed faintly, and the color began to creep back into her cheeks. As old Másha left her to hobble briskly out of the room, she continued, "No, no! I am perfectly well. It was only that you—startled me a little. I—I thought it was—Michael Petrovitch."

Once more the face of the other changed, but she said nothing as she came slowly forward, examining her companion the while with a critical eye. She was the Countess Dravikine, Sophia's younger sister, who, a year or two after Sophia's misalliance, had herself married remarkably well: a young diplomat of the capital, already high in the graces of the official world, and destined to rise steadily, through the clever management of his wife. The Countess Dravikine fitted her adopted world extremely well. She was a woman whose one tender sentiment was that which she held for the sister of her youth. Otherwise she had, not entirely without justice, been called heartless. She was, in any case, admirably adapted for the life she had chosen. And strife social and political, as well as every move in the great game of state intrigue, were as the breath of life to her. She had not come through the fires unsinged. There had been, nay, still were, whispers about her in her world. But they were whispers such as heightened rather than tarnished the brilliance of her reputation. For, whether wrongly or not, her name had more than once been linked with that of the Iron Ruler himself.

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This may or may not have been the reason for her presence to-night in Moscow, whither she had journeyed to stand beside her sister at the anticipated triumph. But whatever her motive, no one could deny that the evening would gain by her presence. Here, beside her glittering sister, she was superb, in her magnificently poised maturity, the voluminous gauzes of her Paris gown floating like clouds about her: the numberless opals in her hair and at her breast only continuing the delicate coloring of the green-and-white costume that was as unusual as it was becoming to her *chic* ugliness of feature. But to-night, for perhaps the first time in her life, Caroline Dravikine was more interested in the costume of another than in her own. She was determined that her sister's appearance should be even more perfect than hers. And to this end she went over the other's toilet detail by detail, only ending the silent scrutiny as Másha reappeared with a slender glass of wine for her mistress.

"Eh bien, Sophie,—yes! drink the wine. If you will not rouge you must keep what color you have!—the sapphires are not in the least too heavy. They have done you up very well. Sonya!" turning to one of the maids, "catch up that curl over the right ear of the Princess. It spoils the effect of severity that suits your face so well. So. Et maintenant, ma chère, renvoyez vos femmes de chambre. Je veux causer avec vous en particulier."

Sophia complied with the request: the maids, with the simple familiarity of the Russian serf, taking their dismissal reluctantly. But Madame Dravikine held them all in awe, and before her they did not dare the protest that their Princess might have listened to. When the sisters were alone, they crossed the room together and seated themselves on a great sofa upholstered in a beautifully faded old brocade, made before the birth of

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the great Catharine. And while Caroline, mindful of her fresh gauzes, sat upright, like a bird poised for flight, her sister lay back, wearily, crushing the veil of her head-dress against a heap of pillows.

There was a moment's pause; then the Countess began, resolutely: "Has Michael Petrovitch seen you yet?"

"Oh no! He has not come up-stairs. I hope that he will not, Katrelka! He—he would not be satisfied, you know."

"Sophie! Sophie! sometimes I cannot wonder that the man is a terror in your life! Satisfied with you! Ciel! If Alexis Vassilyitch expressed dissatisfaction with a toilet of mine, I should not speak to him for a week. No! I should get him into such difficulties with the ministry that he would come to me on his knees in three days! I tell you again, Sophie, that you must assert yourself! Tell me—"

"Stop, Kasha, stop! I am too tired for all this just now. Say what you will to-morrow. You know the thing is a great strain. Tell me only this: Are you quite sure that his Majesty will come? Do you believe it possible that at last everything is to be right—that we are to have Moscow—our old Moscow—here again?"

Having with some little self-control waved aside the unusual rebuff of Sophia's first words, Madame Dravikine listened to the last with a smile, a trifle self-conscious; and in spite of her sister's look—a stare that suggested coldness, the expression remained with her as she answered: "Yes, at last you are safe, dear. You see—I am here from Petersburg; though it has meant leaving Nathalie with her nurses, and Alexis Vassilyitch to spend every night at the yacht-club at baccarat. Besides, Moscow always bores his Majesty; and even the Czarevitch isn't with him this time, you know."

"Caroline, I wish—" Madame Gregoriev's hesitating voice trailed into silence. She knew that it was scarcely

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the hour for remonstrance of that kind. After a moment she began again, "Do you remember how many years it is since we were all at home together, in the Nijny Kislovsky? I should hardly be able to name over the old families now. All the leaders of our day—Madame Apúkhtin, Princess Osínin, the Dowager-Countess Parakoff—they are all dead. It is the wife of the younger Smirnoff—Alexander married a dancer who cannot be received—who keeps up the name. Eugen married Olga Lodoroff. She was a child when I was married. She wouldn't remember me at all now. But we have had not one excuse. They are all to come. Kasha, I am happy to-night! Think—"

"Of course, Sophie, they are coming. One would think you a parvenue, absolutely, to hear you!" broke in Caroline, sharply, still smarting a little at her reading of that unfinished sentence.

Sophia colored at her sister's appellation, but had no time for rejoinder; for at this moment an inner door was pushed gently open and a boy entered.

Sophia rose, hastily. "Ivan! You were asleep two hours ago!"

"But I woke up. And Másha said you were so splendid with the diamonds all on, that I came to see." He looked up at his mother, his big, black eyes shining with interest as he inspected her unusual array. His aunt, sharper-eyed than her sister, perceived that, under his eider-down wrapper, the boy wore no night-flannel, but a more or less complete suit of day-clothes. She said nothing, however, for, though she had no love for children, Ivan was quiet enough to have won her liking.

"Eh bien, mon fils, tu m'as vu. Allez vous en! Retournez immédiatement au lit. Tu vas prendre un rhume! Allez! Vite!" Laughing, she kissed the boy—nor had far to stoop to reach his lips. Then, with a gentle hand, she led him back to the door. The boy

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moved reluctantly, and, ere he left the room, caught his mother round the neck and whispered in her ear a question which was answered by a determined shake of the head.

When he had gone, the Princess stood for an instant looking after him, all her heart in her unconscious eyes. Then, her eyes shining with a softened light, she turned again to her sister, saying, with a smile:

"Come, Katreika, let us go down. The opera must be over by this time; and I must see the rooms before the first arrival."

"Just one moment more, then, Moussia." Madame Dravikine rose, crossed the room, and laid her hand caressingly on the other's arm. "If Michael Petrovitch should be out of temper when we meet him, do not be disturbed. Do not, for the sake of our family, Sophie, betray yourself by—by your face—to-night. Remember, if the scene should grow unbearable I can always—"

"Yes, yes, Kasha. Thank you. But let us not speak of it further—just now."

A moment's silence. Then suddenly, by a common impulse, the two women threw themselves into each other's arms and kissed fervently. When they had separated again, the eyes of the Countess were no less suspiciously wet than those of her sister, the wife of Michael Gregoriev.

It was a pity that functions of formal magnificence were affairs of such rarity in the Gregoriev palace; for no private dwelling in Russia was better adapted to the purpose. The grand entrance opened into a hall of royal dimensions, at the back of which rose a massive staircase, which, ascending to a broad marble landing, separated there into two parts, one of which wound upward to the right, the other to the left, to the upper floor. Upon this landing, facing the hall below, stood the figure of a Diana carved from Carrara marble, its exquisite

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Greek curves wreathed to-night in smilax and white roses, brought up from the southern estates of the Prince.

As the sisters descended the stairs together, each critically surveying the decorations of the rooms below, Prince Michael himself appeared from the direction of the great dining-room, accompanied by his majordomo, to whom he was giving some final orders concerning the reception of his Imperial Majesty.

A remarkable man was Michael Petrovitch, Prince Gregoriev; nominally a chief of the Third Section under Ryelëff; actually head of the secret police of the whole Moscow district; confidential adviser of the royal Governor-General; and privately and intimately known to the Czar, who had long been aware that he had at least one man in his Empire who would balk at no order that should be given him.

In Prince Michael, as so seldom happens, the story of the mind was plainly written upon the body. Six feet three inches he stood in his stockings—two inches more in his regular dress; his head large in proportion, and finely shaped; eyes black, glittering, and unfaceable; mustache jet-black and upstanding, as if made of wire, from the set, ugly mouth, below which jutted a square, blue-shaven chin. And the appearance thus presented was not to be overshadowed, in any feature, by the magnificence of the uniform he wore to-night. Tunic and trousers were of heavy white cloth, the first garment so long, and so heavily embroidered in gold, that his body seemed cased in a glittering sheath down to where the edge of the coat met the top of the boots of softly wrinkling black, that cased his legs almost to the thigh. On his breast were ranged half a dozen orders; conspicuous among them that of St. George, for gallant conduct on the field of action, won years before in the streets of thrice-sacked Warsaw.

As the two women halted, Gregoriev finished his

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orders; and, turning from the cringing serf, stood staring at his wife and her sister. Madame Dravikine was smiling brightly; but Sophia's face was set, her cheeks flaming, her burning eyes unwontedly hard.

"So! Madame, there is a hair-pin caught in the flounce below your right ankle."

Involuntarily the Princess quivered, stooped, and extricated the fine wire pin which even Caroline had not noted. Then she straightened up hastily, sought to meet her husband's sneer with something like resolution, faltered before him, and moved slowly away towards the reception-rooms. The Countess, however, turned to her brother-in-law, and covered her sister's retreat. Certainly Prince Michael gave her his attention; and his manner with women of station was unresentable. Nevertheless, the covert amusement in his voice and in the eyes that looked after his wife, set even Caroline's experienced teeth on edge. She talked with him on the prospects of the evening; and it was a theme so interesting to both of them that neither perceived the little figure, dressed in black velvet, that stole quietly down from the second floor and concealed himself on the landing behind the floral drapery that spread, star-fashion, from the statue of the goddess. An hour or two before Ivan, filled with a vague excitement, had bribed his old nurse to dress him in his best, and, having seen his mother and his aunt in their court-dress, he had been seized with the desire for more. After waiting in his room as long as he could, the boy had stolen down the staircase to a point whence he could see the progress of that great ball which was, in some mysterious way, to change the fortunes of his father's house, and, with them, the long loneliness of his own, dreamy days.

So he crouched there through the hours, well concealed, a figure unconsciously pathetic, his great, sad

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eyes—eyes begotten by his mother, and with all her own woe in their liquid depths—glowing brightly in the white, wistful, childish face; the suggestion of a smile on his straight, delicately chiselled mouth. He had been in his place barely ten minutes when the great doors opened to the first guests; and, during the hour that followed, they were scarcely shut. The opera was over. Fashionable Moscow, accustomed to live at night, swathed itself in furs, and, grumbling at the unwonted distance, had spun across the city, in open sleighs, to the distant Gregoriev palace.

Prince Michael, with his wife and his sister-in-law beside him, stood at the entrance to the gold drawing-room, welcoming the men and women who were announced in rapid succession: men and women whose names set Sophia's heart beating with memory. There were few, indeed, that any major-domo in Petersburg would not have shouted in his best voice. For all of them were members of the great Russian world: Apúkhtin and Mirski, Chipraznik, Smirnoff and the omnipresent Nikitenko—names that had been the last to fade into, the first to reappear from, the baleful night of Tátar rule. Not one of them all but had once known Sophia Blashkov intimately: none but greeted Madame Dravikine as a familiar acquaintance of to-day. But, for the first time since his wedding-day, Michael Gregoriev felt himself slighted for that woman he had so long despised. One and all, women and men alike, they slid by him as rapidly as decency would permit, nor cared to notice him again, though, from far corners and discreet retreating-places, they bestowed on him glances that ran the gamut from curiosity to open horror. Not so did Sophia fare. There was for her at least one hour when the immediate past was blotted out, and her heart warmed and thrilled again as it had in that long-past, joyous winter of her presentation.

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By half an hour past midnight the rooms were crowded and there had settled over the company a hush: that peculiar stillness of expectancy that is destruction to the nerves of a host. In this special pause, however, lay something beyond the ordinary: a discomfort, a palpable uneasiness, that sheathed a subtle threat. Sophia, with her woman's instinct, was no quicker to perceive it than her husband. They, with Countess Caroline and every other woman in the rooms, put the same interpretation upon that significant lull. It spoke thus: "It is late, and he whom we were commanded to meet is not here. His Imperial Majesty's name forced us to this house. Now he has not come. Is the thing a trick? Michael Petrovitch Gregoriev, have you been capable of *this*? Dared you dream that such folly of deceit could really help you?"

Such was the unmistakable sentiment in the air when, at a quarter before one, the sisters met in a corner of the dining-room, and there passed between them a white-faced look. Then Madame Dravikine whispered:

"Sophie, what does it mean? *Did* Nicholas promise?"

The question was a mistake. Princess Gregoriev's lips went white, and she seemed to speak with difficulty. "Caroline! Then *you* were not assured by him? You as well as Michael have deceived me?"

Madame Dravikine flushed scarlet. "I have never discussed your affairs with his Majesty," she returned, haughtily.

Sophia made no reply. Her face, if possible, grew a little more livid, her eyes a trifle more piteous.

Caroline, in spite of her resentment, was touched with pity and with fear; so that, presently, she burst out, impulsively: "Then you are *ruined*, Sophie! Absolutely ruined!"

Suddenly, Princess Sophia's lips curled into a bitter smile. "I have been ruined, as you call it, for eighteen

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years. This—this fiasco cannot make it any worse!" And, before that expressionless tone, Madame Dravikine was still.

A moment or two after this encounter, however, there came a sudden stir. Beyond the dining-room, in the central hall, was a visible flutter of excitement, and whispers sped rapidly through the rooms.

"He has really come!"

"The Czar is here!"

"After all, his Majesty has arrived."

"Where is he, then?"

"In his dressing-room. The royal sleigh is at the gate."

"Ah! Then we must remain!"

During the first seconds of the excitement, the Prince and Princess Gregoriev came together near the door of the specially prepared antechamber where his Majesty was to have his furs removed. Sophia's cheeks were flushed, her eyes burning again; but the face of Michael Petrovitch had become once more impenetrable. There were three minutes of the strained attention. Then, from the door of the antechamber, appeared a stately man, clad in a magnificent uniform, his breast covered with medals and crosses. When they were still many feet apart, a look passed between him and Prince Michael; and, in that look, a new, undying enmity was born in Gregoriev's fierce soul. For the guest from the Kremlin was *not* the Czar, but the Czar's most detested envoy: the notorious Count Alderberg, Minister of the Imperial Household. And his words to the host and hostess began with the infuriating, formal: "I regret—"

Even through that moment of greeting, Princess Sophia scarcely understood the full significance of this presence. Surely, if the Czar had sent a proxy, it meant, at least, recognition. But as the Count carried his cynical smile and gorgeous personality away in the di-

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rection of the dining-room, and the poor lady turned to her husband, she was stricken dumb at sight of the blind fury in his face. It was a look that she had known before—too well. Yet never, perhaps, had such a concentrated mixture of defeat, rage, and rebellion glared from those eyes or straightened that heavy mouth. Now, indeed, she knew that they were undone.

“Alderberg! Alderberg! By God and the devil, had I dreamed—” The low-muttered words trailed off and were bitten into silence, while, by a fierce contortion of the muscles, Michael straightened his face into a semblance of calm. But the hands hanging at his sides were clinched till the nails pierced his palms, and the veins started out, knotted and purple, from his flesh.

For some moments the Princess stood irresolute, terrified lest her guests should witness some part of this outbreak. Madame Dravikine was first to emerge from the throng; and she came towards them, dismay written in her face. She sent one glance at Michael; and then, biting her lip, took her sister’s hand in a gentle clasp.

“Ah! You, too, Katreika!” whispered Sophia. “You, too, think it so bad?”

Caroline shook her head sadly. “We are helpless, Sophie. A fit of Nicholas’ laziness has lost the world to you. Look!”

There was no time for response; for, at this moment, the Prince and Princess Mirski came up with chill good-nights that were passively accepted. They were immediately followed by the Osínin, who barely looked towards Michael, but had the grace to murmur some excuse to his wife. On their heels hastened the Apúkh-tin, who played the few seconds of farce with angry hauteur. Then, injury to insult, Alderberg himself approached, having been in the rooms a bare five minutes. And, as he disappeared into the royal alcove, the throng

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in the rooms began to fly the house as from a spot plague-smitten.

At the instant of Alderberg's appearance in the hall, word of the defection of the Czar had swept like wild-fire through the rooms. The Minister of the Imperial Household was nearly as unpopular among the court circle of Moscow as he was among the peasant class; and nothing could have been more unfortunate than the choice of him as the proxy of his Majesty. Within five minutes, whispers were everywhere. The drawing, dining, and dressing rooms were full of the rippling hiss of talk which in every case preceded either frowns or angry laughter. Ivan, from his hiding-place on the stairway, caught many phrases the significance of which he could not fathom; but which filled him with pre-science of evil. His troubled eyes sought the face of his mother in the hall below; and he found there what he had feared. From his vantage-point he had a clear view of the quickening rush of departure. Crowds were pouring up-stairs to re-don their furs; though many of these people had not yet recovered from the chill of their long drive from the Grand Theatre. Soon the great staircase was so crowded that many who were still below made no effort to ascend, deputing the bringing of their wraps to friends who had forced an upward passage. For so bitter was the night that few had pursued the usual custom of leaving their sables outside, on the arms of patient footmen.

Ivan watched the good-nights to his father and mother; and noted also the lack of them. He beheld the drooping, weary figure of the Princess, in her blaze of gems, forcing piteous smiles of farewell. And he was glad that there were so many who, under cover of the throng, evaded the ordeal of the good-night, and slipped away from the brilliant rooms as from a dwelling haunted with evil.

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There was but one consolation for this misery—it was very brief. The crowd that had taken a long hour to assemble, dispersed and melted away into the darkness of the city within the space of fifteen minutes. There had, indeed, been some who had arrived after his Excellency the Count. These, perceiving the crowd out-streaming, divined calamity, and, without so much as descending from their sleighs, turned about and departed as they had come.

By half-past one o'clock three figures stood alone in the great hall; while on the staircase, beside the motionless Diana, crouched a lonely, frightened child, who still stared, as if with enchanted eyes, at his mother's white, despairing face. Princess Sophia stood motionless, her head bent, her hands clasped tightly before her, persistently avoiding her husband's eyes. Caroline, with a half-protective air, was between her sister and her brother-in-law. Michael, his face as colorless as that of the statue, his eyes alight with the fire in his brain, stared straight before him, into some bitter world of his own. About them was the unbearable silence which Madame Dravikine, who alone was unaccustomed to it, finally broke in desperation:

"Come, Sophie! Come to bed. You are too tired to stay down here. You'll be ill."

But, at the moment, Sophia had, in her heart, the thought of another than herself. At sight of some unwonted suggestion in his face of a pain with which she had been long familiar, there had entered into her heart a sudden pity for the man she so feared. Imbued with a momentary courage, she advanced to her husband and took his hand. "Michael," she murmured, "I—am sorry."

The man started in amazement, and then drew away from her, at the same time turning upon her his burning eyes. "Sorry! Good God! Then get to your ikons and pray. For me—there's no sorrow for me. Nicholas

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has played his game. Now mine begins. Sorrow for him, if you like. For, by the help of Satan, he and Moscow shall know me yet!"

The low-spoken words ended with a snarl of inarticulate anger. And the moment they were uttered, he turned brusquely, and, without another word or look, disappeared in the direction of his offices, where, as his wife knew, he would probably work till far into the next day.

The two women watched him go. Then, after a pause, they found themselves clinging to each other, and in this fashion began the ascent of the stairs. Both of them were weeping: not loudly; rather as the reaction from the strain of the past hour. As they reached the landing, they were joined by another. Ivan came openly from his hiding-place, and barred their path, guilt-laden. But there was to be no rebuke to-night for his disobedience. On the contrary, his mother took him into her arms and clasped him close, as if his presence brought comfort for much immediate pain. And the boy, feeling the hot tears from her eyes fall upon his face, laid his arms about her neck, and yielded himself to a grief and a terror that he understood vaguely, but could not as yet define.

CHAPTER II

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UP to the time of Prince Gregoriev's marriage, that peculiar man had used his huge dwelling as a gypsy uses a moor: he had wandered about, living for three months in the west wing, three more in the east, again for six high up in the central portion of the great building, taking with him the rather simple impedimenta of his state, and arranging them as he chose. The presence of Sophia had, however, made at least one change in his existence. Little either of time or attention as he gave her, Michael was driven, by mere consciousness of her proximity, to fix upon some certain suite of rooms for the pursuit of his personal labors and his peculiar recreations. And, after the first irritation of necessity had worn away, he found the arrangement to possess unforeseen advantages. Unlike his class, he was a man of simple, even austere habits in his working hours. Luxury at such times meant annoyance to him; and only the barest necessities of furniture and attire were admitted to his periods of solitary labor. Upon his establishment in his now permanently arranged suite in the eastern wing of the palace, he found that certain papers and written references—kept hitherto under lock and key, and guarded from every eye—could at last find a permanent place in that work-room which no one was permitted to enter, even for purposes of cleaning. For twenty-eight years, now, this had formed one of his six rooms, of which two on the second floor were connected

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with those below by a private staircase. By degrees, his habits had become as fixed at those of a woman. His many vices were as strong, as severe, as his few virtues; and more than one man had remarked that, so far as was known, there was not a single balancing weakness in the nature of this iron man.

At two o'clock on the morning after the ball, Michael had seated himself at the great table in his sanctum, and prepared for work. He had no idea of bed; for sleep in his present state, his brain afire with the fury of unwonted defeat, would have been impossible. But he could still pin his thoughts down to the composition of two or three state documents—reports requiring a liberal use of imagination—before allowing himself the luxury of setting about arranging his plan of retaliation: retaliation upon the great Czar, his master. Thus it was that dawn, the late, wintry dawn, rising seven hours later, fell upon his dishevelled figure stretched out in a chair beside the paper-piled table, his heavy brows drawn down in deep thought, his lungs filled with deep draughts of smoke drawn from the pipe between his teeth.

The passage which led down to this dread room of his, opened also into the office in which he conducted business with his colleagues, and which was decorated and furnished with Oriental magnificence. The inner room, of which only Piotr, his body-servant, had ever had so much as a glimpse—the room that had sheltered this master of men and of evil at the ebb and the flood of his power—was bare of ornament, and held not one unnecessary article. The two windows were uncurtained; but outside the customary double panes, the cracks of which were filled with pounded wool, stretched a significant iron net-work which was embedded far in the stones at the window-edges. Within, the four walls were covered with staring, yellow plaster; only one side

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of it, that opposite the working-chair, being partly covered—and that only by two big maps: one of the Russian Empire, with its dependencies; the other covered with a mass of line-tracery and unreadable jottings, written in what was evidently a cipher. The key to this was hidden in the brain of the man who had composed it.

Michael himself had dubbed this square of parchment a map: his map of men. And it contained mention of some members in almost every great family in the Empire. Nicholas himself was there, side by side with his valet—a man, indeed, of vast importance in that ministerial world to which a Gregoriev still aspired.

Finally, beside these things, high up in a corner of the east wall, was the inevitable, dingy little daub meant for the blessed and blessing Virgin: a superstitious but universal custom which even Michael submitted to, and which represented, perhaps, his single remaining shred of religion. For the rest, a huge table, a single chair, and two bookcases filled with a small, but remarkably well-chosen collection of reference-books, finished the characteristic arrangement of the room.

Here, this morning, the gray light of a winter dawn mingled with the dull flare of the hanging-lamp increasing the ghastliness of his appearance, sat Michael Gregoriev, in the stale bitterness of a night-old rage and mortification. On the floor, in an unceremonious heap, lay his heavily embroidered coat, with its medals still upon it. In its stead the Prince had wrapped himself in a worn robe of old brocade, fur-lined. Heavy felt slippers shod his feet. His hair was tumbled over his head in a leonine mass. His features were gray; but his eyes still glowed above the dark, purplish circles that shadowed his cheeks. His documents were finished. He had sat for two hours and more in this present brown study; and, tested as his endurance had been, his

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concentration was still absolute. On the table, near at hand, stood a flask of vodka, nearly empty, and a jar of water scarcely touched.

Nevertheless, the Prince of the lonely house was not drunk: was not even misty-headed. At a quarter after eight there came a knock at the door, and his hoarse, "Enter!" was as immediate as was the return to his reverie. Nor did he lift his eyes as Piotr entered softly, arranged the steaming samovar at his master's elbow, placed bread, fresh butter, and a dish of lentils beside it, and then departed as noiselessly as he had come.

For five minutes the man beside the table did not stir. Then he rose, still preoccupied, crossed the room to his cipher map, and ran his finger down a certain line of hieroglyphics till he found what he sought, and paused to read one passage carefully, twice. Then, when his face had straightened till his lips actually stretched themselves into the semblance of a sardonic smile, he dropped the subject of his thoughts, returned to the table, and made himself some tea. Glass after glass of this he drank, steaming hot. But no solid food passed his lips; and in twenty minutes he reseated himself and set about the writing of two letters, on the envelope of each of which he placed, in the lower corner, a peculiar mark—a sign of the Third Section, known to a few men, and signifying privacy and importance.

These letters were the result of his recent cogitation; and both concerned the affair of the previous night. He had realized his situation to the full; and he knew that it must be faced. His sensations were unfamiliar, however; for it was many years since he had had to acknowledge a defeat so absolute and so grave. Never before, however, had he pitted himself against a force that strong men will not take seriously because it is never to be logically reckoned with. Nevertheless, that force must, sooner or later, be acknowledged by every hu-

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man being. Michael Gregoriev especially should have taken it into consideration long before; for it was many years since he began his preparations for what last night was to have brought him: a place in the last unconquered world of power. His preparation, however, had led him only through ways peopled by men: and for men and their deeds he was more than a match. Their caprices, their follies, their faithlessness, their treachery even, he had learned long since to calculate and to cope with. Women, also, he had known: many women; experienced, innocent, negative, or wicked. And those who had ventured upon his ground, he had not failed to conquer. It was in the knowledge of these experiences that he had stood; by its light preparing a *coup* that was to carry the last fortress of that upper world which still held out against him: that peculiar body of women and men called "society."

Years before, with this same purpose in his mind, he had married a daughter of this class, whose only dower was her birth, and whose only covetable possession her place among her kind. And this effort had failed, entirely. Sophia Blashkov, a quiet, gentle, blue-blooded, little *débutante*, had found herself utterly unequal to the task either of forcing a place in those glittering, scornful ranks for her black-blooded, much-condemned husband, or of keeping her own, now that she bore his name. True, her marriage had, probably, made possible her younger sister's exceptional and unhopèd-for match. But Michael himself felt that he had sadly bungled a most important affair. Perceiving his wife's uselessness for his purpose, all the little admiration he had ever had for the fragile girl changed speedily into an angry despitè. For the moment, he put her and his social ambitions away together, and turned back to that world of official intrigue and promotion which had actually occupied him from that distant time until with-

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in the last few weeks. The old defeat had long since been buried under a heap of newly gained official honors. But of these, alas! he had now had his fill. For the first time he was tasting to the full a measure of bitterness as rank as any the world has to offer. For there is something in the deliberate rejection by one's kind: a mortification, a sickening sense of helplessness, of rage, of revolt, that belongs to this experience alone. It is a kind of suffering in which women frequently become connoisseurs. But its taste is none the less nauseous to the man on whom Fate forces it.

Michael Gregoriev, then, a furious man of men, was to-day enduring that which has turned many a woman soul-sick and weary of existence. All the amazement of unforeseen repulse: the agonized acceptance of an unjust superiority, a scorn, a pitiless disdain; the totally capricious setting of one's self apart from one's fellows as something too despicable for consideration; above all, one's utter powerlessness against this arbitrary judgment—all these things he felt, and every one of them cut him to the quick. For Michael Gregoriev's egotism had grown with every year.

In his black hour he did not fail to indulge in the usual, useless revilement of the superior class: an act as natural as it is ridiculous. Was that society that he had sought out and thought to grasp so pure, so free from corruption, so spotlessly fair, that his, Prince Gregoriev's peccadilloes must needs bar him from its gatherings? Certainly this reputation of his was one thing that had kept the door he knocked on closed. But there were other reasons—innumerable ones, in fact; some of them adequate, others entirely inconsistent, that Princess Mirski or Madame Apúkhtin might have named. Yet, in the final summing-up, there would probably have been a traditional indefiniteness about the wherefore of the Gregoriev ostracism. It was simply understood,

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instinctively, throughout Moscow, that no person of that name was knowable. And this fact, *mirabile dictu*, had, after long cogitation, been at last borne in upon Michael—man as he was.

Prince Gregoriev, though he was generally looked upon as a parvenu, had not, like most of that type, been born in the gutter. On the contrary, there was behind him a long line of recluses, eccentrics, hermits almost, bearing the strongest resemblance to one another by reason of their oddities. One special trait, stronger than any other, served to bind them all together, father and son, through generations. This was their constant and unconquerable sense of personal isolation: of loneliness. Crowds of friends and sycophants might surround the Gregoriev. He was none the less bitterly alone. It was, perhaps, a morbid perception of individuality, of the inevitable isolation of every soul. But whatever its cause, this sense, in more than one of the race, had developed into extreme stages of melancholia.

The palace in Konnaia Square had been founded in the year 1679, by the third of the line, Alexis Gregorievitch, who had purposely placed the dwelling of his race in this far corner of the city, out of the possible range of decent dwellings. And none of the succession of Peters and Mikhails that followed, ever thought to reproach this act of their ancestor. The details of the life of one of these men would have sufficed for all, until the breaking of the direct line. But the last Prince had died childless; and the estate descended by entail to Michael, eldest son of the dead Prince's dead brother. And though in the present Gregoriev the instincts of his race survived, they had been in a large measure altered and redirected. For when, at the age of twenty, Michael had come into his inheritance, he had, in the first hour of his new estate, set himself a certain goal, at the

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same time turning an iron will and dire traits towards its attainment. Russia was then just entering upon the rule of the Iron Czar. Iron men, therefore, were soon in demand, to replace the more vacillating officials who had served the first Alexander. Prince Gregoriev came forward at once with the request for a position. And immediately he became involved in that species of underhand, almost underground, business (necessary to most governments and to all absolute monarchies) which reached its extreme depth in the tyranny that ruled Russia during the next thirty years.

It did not take many months for Nicholas to perceive that there lived in Moscow a supreme performer of questionable transactions. Upon test, the man showed himself to be all the Czar had thought—and more. He was a man without a conscience. And the official world rejoiced, and put much work upon him: so much, that lo! a Gregoriev soon became necessary to the governmental world. And Michael had worked to more purposes than one. His great master had no fault to find with his performance of duty. Thus it was not until too late that more than one of the ministers discovered the fact that it may be better to have certain things bungled than to have them carried through by a man so clever that he can put knowledge amassed by the way to double—sometimes triple, uses. This was what Gregoriev could, and did, do. He was, *par excellence*, a man of his time: in many ways even in advance of it. And he had by no means begun to approach his goal before all the men with whom he came in daily contact, and many of those considerably above him, had come to stand in terrible fear of his accurate and tabulated knowledge of things they had believed to be unsuspected by any human being beyond themselves.

But there was one man in the Empire who, as yet, remained in ignorance of this trait of his official: who

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had never felt the faintest scratch beneath the velvet of his favorite cat's-paw. Thus it was that Michael's momentary defeat had come about. Czar Nicholas crossed him openly; put upon him an affront unbearable; lowered him in the eyes of three hundred puny men and women over whom he had no power for revenge. It was, then, as a result of this, that treason had begun to surge through the mind of a brilliantly wicked man. And had he been able to read certain thoughts passing through his subject's head, it is possible that the Iron One might have felt a certain uneasiness of mind at possibilities of the future; and a rather poignant regret at his negligence of the evening before.

Two hours had gone by since Piotr had carried his master's first meal to that master's work-room. Michael had finished his letters. His first anger was gone and his plan of "payment" already under way. With his mind thus relieved, then, he suddenly began to feel the fatigue of thirty hours of sleeplessness. With a comforting sense of relaxation, he ascended to his bedroom, partly undressed himself, lay down on the bed, and within five minutes had fallen into a sound sleep.

And it was two hours later and Ivan Veliki had rung the hour of eleven, when the silence of the room was broken by the entrance of Piotr, who, at sight of his master asleep at this unwonted hour, halted in surprise and confusion. It took him ten minutes to nerve himself to the waking of the Prince. But it was only ten more before Michael, who had sworn at his valet steadily, meantime, for the delay, entered his public office, fully dressed, to greet General Ryúmin, a member of the Imperial staff, just now sent as an envoy from the Kremlin. Michael, who chose to greet him with all the courtesy he could command, hurried forward, his hands out-stretched, and gave the greetings of the day.

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"So! I roused you from sleep, Prince? However, I come direct from the Kremlin; and his Majesty commands an audience of you at half-past noon. He is here ex-officio, of course, with only Alderberg, Zelanoi, and ourselves, on the matter of the forestry ukase. But about you—there's another matter he wants you for: the petition for the families of convict-exiles to follow them to Siberia. The Council has rejected it twice; but Benckendorf is still agitating the question. His Majesty still seems to object, strongly. You, too, I suppose?"

"If the wife or the daughter be pretty—of course," returned Gregoriev, lightly. And Ryúmin, seeing that he was not to be drawn, hastily forced a laugh.

They passed thence into a discussion of local affairs in which they had recently acted as allies when Ryúmin had been Lieutenant-Governor of the Moscow province. No undercurrent of enmity marred their intercourse. Gregoriev was certainly an adept at applying or loosening his screws. His guest had felt them sharply once or twice before to-day. He knew Gregoriev's power; and Michael asked no more. He had soon made the General entirely at his ease, and the half-hour passed most agreeably. At last, however, Ryúmin rose, tacitly to remind his host of the Imperial audience. They had now, indeed, by driving as fast as possible, barely time to reach the Kremlin. Gregoriev, nevertheless, paid no attention to the other's movement.

"Come, Boris Vassilyitch, one more cigar! We may as well settle now the details of this Pahlen affair. You wish a conviction in any case, I understand?"

"My dear Prince, it can wait. His Majesty's wishes are more important than mine, you know."

Gregoriev leaned back in his chair and took three leisurely puffs before he observed, lazily: "I don't agree with you. However, I must not keep you if you have

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some other appointment. I shall hardly start for the Kremlin before one.

"But—but my dear Gregoriev! The Czar! Your audience!— You see you forget, my good fellow!"

"I forget nothing whatever, General: not even promises that are not kept."

Ryúmin stared, open-mouthed, as Gregoriev's gloomy eyes met his. Then, with a thrill of wonder, he understood that the man before him had the superb audacity thus openly to rebuke his Emperor.

Certainly Gregoriev's suggestion was no empty threat. Nicholas Romanoff actually waited something more than an hour for the arrival of the Moscow police official. When at last Prince Gregoriev was ushered into the royal presence, the voice of the master of ceremonies shook as he announced the name; and, while he closed the door that shut this madman from his sight, he longed and yet dreaded to hear his Majesty's first words. Should he — had he time to — rush forth and spread abroad the news of Gregoriev's fall, before the broken man should issue from that ominously quiet room? Fortunately for himself, the master of ceremonies was hardly of an adventurous disposition. He cogitated the matter till he felt it too late to perform the errand and get back in time to see Gregoriev's expression as he emerged from the Presence. Nevertheless, minute after minute went by, till an hour had passed: time for a comprehensive reproof and dismissal, truly! But the feeble-minded one was prepared for anything by the time the miracle happened. It was three o'clock before he beheld, issuing from the audience-chamber, side by side and chatting together in tones of intimacy, Michael Petrovitch Gregoriev and Nicholas I., Emperor of Russia. Nor was that all. For it was the face not of the official but of his Imperial Majesty, that wore an expression of uneasiness, of disquietude, almost—of alarm.

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Gregoriev left the Kremlin, by the Gate of the Saviour, on foot. He had dismissed his sleigh upon his arrival. But, though the afternoon was yet young, the light of the brief winter day was almost gone. Lights were appearing in the shop-windows of the Tverskaia as Michael, muffled comfortably in his sables, entered the celebrated street and walked along it, leisurely, in a direction leading directly away from his distant palace. He had no definite goal in mind. He was in the high humor of immediate success. Many-colored Moscow lay all about him: his city, wherein he was known to and feared by, nearly every man. Labyrinth though it was, there was scarcely a corner, an alley, a court-yard in that most jumbled of cities that he did not know. Moscow belonged to him as London to Dickens, Paris to Balzac. And, like the great novelists, his walks, always a delight, played also an important part in his profession. It was, however, rare that he issued forth in his present guise. The Iákiminskaia, for instance, saw him oftenest as a petty merchant; the Piatnitskaia as a Jewish or Tatar trader; the Basmanaia as a soldier, or petty officer off duty; other quarters as a member of a workingman's artel, a university hanger-on, or a loafer, as the neighborhood demanded. To-day, however, being himself, he directed his steps towards the fashionable part of the town, passing from the shopping district into the old Equerries' quarter lying behind, and west of, the Kremlin hill. It was possible that he had some hazy idea of startling his wife's family by an unwelcome visit; and from them gaining the latest gossip concerning last night's ball. But the idea remained nebulous. Nicholas had responded too readily to his touch, the few lines of cipher on his map had proved too disturbing to the royal mind, for the tormentor's pride not to have been restored by such evidence of his power. He knew well that their recent talk, in which he had

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played his difficult part with genius, had left his Majesty fearful, not of revelations concerning mere speculations or juggled laws, but of something touching his very seat upon the throne; a certain disclosure that might bring up again that old, forgotten matter of his unnatural accession to the throne in place of his elder brother Constantine. And Michael had an unfounded belief that the Czar would, therefore, in some unknown way, bring him, peaceably, the social power he now trebly desired. Therefore it was not difficult to turn him from his half-formed purpose.

Leaving the great street for the comparatively quiet Nikolskaia, he presently encountered one of the unofficial companions of his leisure hours: a retired army officer, with a reputation at cards which few gamblers cared to ignore. Colonel Lodoroff greeted the Prince with a customary effusion, and found little difficulty in drawing him on to a certain small club, maintained by twenty members, of which the very existence was unknown to outsiders. Here, by day or by night, could be found companions for any carousal, partners for any known game of skill or chance; in short, that species of person which the ordinary club does its best to exclude. The small building's exquisitely decorated rooms were not, however, unfamiliar to the eyes of certain members of the opposite sex, whose eligibility to admittance consisted only in certain powers of attraction and entertainment.

Within the discreet recesses of this nameless organization, Michael Petrovitch spent two or three agreeable hours. And finally, at six o'clock—more than an hour after despatching a short message to Piotr, in Konnaia Square—Gregoriev, with Lodoroff, three other men, and Mesdames Nathalie, Anna, and Célestine, whose last names were as changeable as their complexions, set off, in four public droschkies, for the Gregoriev palace.

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Piotr, on receipt of his master's note, carried it at once to his wife, who was one of the half-dozen serfs educated through the influence of Princess Sophia. And upon her explanation of its contents he rushed off to set the kitchens in a hum of preparation. It was no novelty, this order: a dinner for eight to be served at an hour's notice in his excellency's dining-room, that the Princess need not be "disturbed." The chef—a Frenchman, not a serf, chattered with excitement and displeasure while he composed his hurried menu. Piotr and Sóssha, the major-domo, set to work together in the round dining-room in the Prince's wing, both of them thinking drearily of the task that must be theirs in that same room on the following morning. And all through the servants' quarters might be heard, from time to time, a certain blasphemous little prayer, uttered in the expressionless tone that bespoke long familiarity: "God be merciful to us!"—the sign of the cross made in the air—"and cause the devil soon to take unto himself his own!"

But the lord of the underworld had evidently no present need of the soul of the head of the Gregoriev house. It was a quarter before seven when the Prince's special suite was invaded by the noisy party, already in the first state of reckless exhilaration induced by an extravagant use of golden fluid so dear to the Russian palate. Piotr, Sóssha, and three or four of the older serfs who were accustomed to these entertainments, were in attendance, all of them drooping with the fatigue of the previous day, but none of them pausing to marvel at the vitality of their master. The table was satisfactorily decorated. The ladies were pleased to praise their corsage bouquets of camellias so hurriedly obtained; and all the party partook heartily of the *hors d'œuvres* and liqueurs served on a side-table, according to the old Muscovite custom. Gregoriev was the only one of them all who appeared to be quite unaffected by what he had

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drunk. But he was, nevertheless, the evil genius of the company, flattering the women, taunting the men, to continually increasing libations.

Meantime, on the second floor of the palace, not far away from that dining-room beneath, a very different meal was in progress. Princess Gregoriev, her sister, and Ivan, her boy, sat together at a small, round table, waited on by women. Only one of the three made much pretence at eating. Madame Gregoriev, red-eyed, but very calm, sat beside her sister, whose face also bore traces of recent tears. Both of the ladies continually pressed food upon the boy, who, as he ate with boyish heartiness, talked to them with the pleasant and wonderful unconsciousness of childhood. The difficult hour was nearly over before sounds of the affair below first began to be audible to them. But at the first, muffled scream of laughter, Madame Gregoriev started, violently, all the color flying from her face, and a ghastly pallor taking its place. The Countess Dravikine, after one instant of puzzled consideration, leaned forward, and began a hastily animated conversation with her nephew, upon all sorts of boyish affairs. Fortunately the effort was needed only for a moment or two, for presently, Alexei, Ivan's special serf, a combination of playfellow and valet, who had been summoned by the tactful Másha appeared in the doorway, waiting an order to remove his young master. It was time. Madame Dravikine's voice could no longer override the noise from below. Moreover, Ivan had now ceased to eat, and was sitting motionless, his mouth drawn into a pitiful line, a spot of vivid red flaming from each pale cheek, his great eyes wistfully, anxiously, seeking those of his mother, which as persistently avoided them. Suddenly there came from below a piercing scream: a scream holding in it a note at which Caroline, forgetting everything else, sprang suddenly to her feet, crying:

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"Sophia, the thing is unbearable! How can you possibly permit yourself to endure it? For God's sake, pull yourself up, and leave this—"

"Ivan! Alexei is waiting for you. Go at once!" broke in the Princess, sharply, her eyes fixed upon her sister with a light of bitter reproof in their weary depths. At the same time, she held out both hands to her son.

Without a word, the boy rose and went to his mother. A kiss passed between them. Then he turned and walked straight to the door. He did not once look back. But neither woman failed to perceive that his delicate hands were clinched so tightly that the bloodless knuckles were tinged with blue.

When the door closed behind him, Sophia Ivanovna answered her sister's unfinished question: "You think I should leave this house. Do you for an instant imagine that he would permit his son to go with me? Am I then to leave my child here—to *that*?"

With a low exclamation, Caroline went forward and fell upon her knees beside her sister, asking for pardon between her shaking sobs.

CHAPTER III

THE GREGORIEV HEIR

THE west wing of the palace in the Serpoukhovskaia sheltered two beings whose outward and inner lives, though divergent in every detail, were nevertheless bound fast together by the most powerful tie of nature and of law. But it was at the other end of the huge building that there dwelt the solitary offspring of this unnatural union, a boy now in the eleventh year of childhood, companionless, physically inactive, mentally over-quick, perceptive, and quaintly imaginative.

Despite the fact that solitude was as much the keynote of his existence as of that of his father and mother, many eyes were concentrated upon the development, spiritual and mental, of Ivan Gregoriev. Upon him had been fastened the hopes even of the Gregoriev serfs, who were as devoted to him and to his mother as they were miserably afraid of their master. An hour's observation was enough to make plain the fact that Ivan had in him not one of his father's characteristics. For this reason he was said to resemble his mother. But as a matter of fact this statement was hardly more true than one of the paternal resemblance would have been. The boy certainly worshipped his mother; who had been his one staff during that fearful and lonely pilgrimage of his through dark caverns of speculation concerning the mysteries of his own and his mother's isolation: facts of which he had been cognizant at a startling age. From the first, indeed, he had stood, as it were, apart:

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a silent, observant young creature, not morbid nor markedly unnatural, yet holding within himself possibilities not to be found in the usual hobbledehoy of his age. And though it is probable that, in after years, he felt his aloofness far more keenly than at the present period, it was in his early boyhood that his sense of it was most apparent to others.

That Ivan should, from the first, have been a lonely child, was inevitable, considering his parentage. In the Russia of that day sons of noble families were not often kept under tutors. They were more frequently sent to select private schools, where they would meet only their own class, till they were of age to enter one or another of the "corps" or academies, started by Nicholas for the noble youths whom he wished to officer his army and people the royal households. Young Gregoriev, however, had, up to this time—the new year of 1852—worked, studied and dreamed by himself under the direction, first of his mother, recently of his tutor, Monsieur Ludmillo, the son of a Polish exile, educated in France, and only permitted to re-enter Russia upon the death of his father, in 1847. This man, a gentle, melancholy idealist, like so many of his race, had early taken a sincere liking for his young pupil, nor found, as the years passed, anything special to complain of in Ivan's performance of his tasks or his obedience during their many hours together. Of all, in short, who had to do with the young Prince, one person only, and that his father, felt any displeasure with him. But Prince Michael looked upon his son with a kind of bitter, resentful scorn as a creature of his mother's type: weak in character, and holding within him not one of those fierce and reckless traits which the traditional Gregoriev proudly claimed for his own.

From the time of his babyhood, Ivan had lived in the extreme eastern end of the house—as far as possible

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from his father's rooms. In this putting of him away even from her own proximity, Sophia had shown the self-sacrifice of devotion. During many a night had the unhappy woman lain thinking of her child, hungering for the pressure of his young head upon her breast, his little body by her side, nay, the sound of his sleeping breath in the same room with her. But she was determined to keep him as unfamiliar as possible with the details of his father's existence; and only in this way was it to be done. By day, however, she lived in the room that was first nursery, later school and living room, making herself the companion of her boy in his every occupation, patiently, from day to day, searching his childish face for incipient signs of unhappiness or melancholy. But it was not until she was too familiar with his every expression that such signs began to appear; and then, through very over-intimacy, she failed to perceive the marks of those peculiar characteristics that had already begun to mould his nature.

At eleven, Ivan was tall and well grown, shapely of limb, delicate of hand and foot, large-eyed, clear-skinned. In certain ways his face did suggest the face of his mother. But the fine chiselling of her features was augmented in the sensitiveness of his lip and nostril; and for the rest, his eyes, that resembled soft, black pansies, and his jet-black, stubborn hair, that grew like a thick, velvet cap above his smooth forehead, were all his own. His hands, likewise, were such as had never been seen upon a Blashkov. They were white and hard, but pliable as rubber, their fingers extraordinarily long. In fact, they were hands for which any musician, teacher or virtuoso, would, had such commodities been marketable, have bought at any price. And this fact had early been recognized by Ivan's tutor, and by him eagerly seized upon and used.

Monsieur Ludmillo was hardly the typical lazy, effemi-

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nate, creature whose only interests in life were holidays and the society of such ladies as would receive him. On the contrary he was conscientious, retiring to a point of absolute self-effacement, and able to forget himself only in his one great passion: music. He was a Pole of the Chopinesque type: and it was in spite of himself that he gave his pupil, besides the regular studies, a very thorough grounding in the classical masters, taught him something of the spirit of Schumann and Schubert, and even permitted in Ivan's repertoire such bits of Glinka and Sérov as were to be managed by the boyish hands. Happily, Ludmillo had not lived enough in the fashionable world for him to endure the vapid floridities of the late Italian school; but there rose in him a secret delight when he heard his charge, left to himself, return again and again to the wild and haunting melodies of little Russia, Lithuania, and, above and beyond all, of rebellious, crushed, poetic Poland.

The instrument on which Ivan gained his first understanding of the art that he was to make his own, was one that had come into the palace upon the marriage of his mother. In the days before the complete stifling of her talents, Sophia had been wont often to dissipate the misery of her earlier disillusiones in music. But there arrived a time when grief became too deep for such sentimental balm; and then the piano's painted cover had been closed, as she believed, for good, and the instrument, at her orders, carried away to the unused room where, years afterwards, Ludmillo discovered it and put it into some sort of order. Madame Gregoriev's assent to his timid request to have it moved to Ivan's rooms had been indifferently granted. But later, when, in the candle-lit dusk, Ivan and his tutor drew instinctively together before the instrument, they were more and more often joined by another figure, silently stealing, who would listen to the half-forgotten melodies of other

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years that were, for her, ghost-haunted, till further endurance became impossible, and she would leave the twain again, and, through the lonely night, weep away some of the still-rankling bitterness, the incurable smart, of her many wounds. Later, however, came days when the memories held less of sadness, and, in those rich, slow harmonies, she began to discern vague thoughts, faintest hopes that, somewhere, perhaps deep in the fire-heart of God, she should learn His excuse for suffering: be taught the wherefore of the present: receive that compensation that must exist, to balance the account held for her by eternity. In time she came even to think a little of the music-maker: that silent man to whom her own existence seemed a thing peaceful and fine in its absolute security from any form of want. She realized, through him, those other thousands in the world who had lived through lifetimes of conscious insignificance and unattainable desire, nor thought these serious evils. In short she was given a horizon whereon she began to see things properly proportioned. And there, at last, she beheld also her son, and all the possibilities in the future of those for whom the road of life lies all ahead. But even she, who knew him best of all, knew little of Ivan's inner self. She never surmised his strange consciousness of the mighty void within his soul: the aching gap that his life could never fill: the unspoken question that waited in him, fulminating, till he should at last demand his answer from the most high God.

In the face of such things it is difficult to reiterate the denial that Ivan was a morbid boy. True, he bore an inheritance from his mother. The life she had led before his birth had certainly left its mark upon him. But that instinctive sadness had in her been tinged with an inner joy: the joy of eager motherhood. And in Ivan this joy found its repetition in a vein of practical gayety.

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There were days when his mischief was as diabolical as one could wish it: when Ludmillo, tormented, was still brought to laugh at his piquant, irresistible nonsense. Nor was the boy without other traits of his sex and age. There were weeks when he was full of the wildest plans for his future career: being all for the joys of the physical, beside which mental labor was to play a most unimportant rôle. He would be an explorer. Siberia, North America, Central Africa, were to open before his determined efforts. Or the Celestial Empire might be penetrated to its innermost recesses by him in his undetectable disguise; and he was to come home by the caravan route laden with costliest treasures. Again it was all his wish to be another Nimrod: Indian tigers, American buffaloes, African elephants were to go down in thousands before his imaginary gun. While once more (this when his every spare moment was divided between *Peter the Great* and the *Arabian Nights*), he saw himself, at the head of a Cossack army, storming Constantinople and carrying away the most beautiful Princess ever enslaved in royal harem. And while the boy silently performed these great deeds, he was also engaged upon a few simpler, but more salutary physical feats in a neighboring gymnasium, whence he emerged with muscles fairly well-developed, and a hand and eye unusually quick at the foils.

His days were kept wisely full. At that time it was the custom to cram children rather unmercifully. But Sophia and Ludmillo together made saner disposal of Ivan's hours. He was made to know thoroughly what he knew. And it was their great effort to keep him busy enough to prevent a real appreciation of his isolated life. Their plans were made skilfully and carried out to the letter. Wherefore the fact that their end was not actually accomplished, could be charged only to the merciless quickness of the boy's own apperceptions.

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How early it was that he learned the difference between himself and others, it would be nearly impossible to say. His mother, indeed, was probably spared the discovery of his knowledge. For he was reserved beyond his years, and a violent secret pride was his one unsuspected Gregoriev trait. However it happened, Ivan learned, as a very little boy, that only in his life was no provision ever made for visits to and from others of his kind. He knew that he had been left out of the lives of his class: that the young Mirskies, Blashkovs, Kropotkins, Osínin, visiting almost daily among themselves, never came to, never asked for, him. He even divined the one or two half-hearted attempts on his mother's part to obtain for him at least the occasional companionship of her own nephews and second-cousins. But what it was that hurt him so unconscionably about this knowledge he did not realize until after he had come into manhood. It was doubtful if even his mother, suffering for him, had a greater sense of unhappiness than he, in his blind sense of injustice somewhere. For to Sophia, ostracism had long since become a kind of second nature. But for her son it still had all the misery of perennial newness.

Nevertheless, despite the deadening of time, the mother-yearning over her child's loneliness never wholly left the poor Princess. In the case of the ball, for instance, if her labor for its success, if the care spent on its details, the summoning of Caroline from Petersburg, the unwonted extravagance of her Paris costume, had one and all been suggested by her husband, they had been carried out by her not for his sake nor for her own; but for the sake of all that it might afterwards accomplish for Ivan. Once she and Prince Michael were actually accepted, their son must naturally find his new place. Thus, for weeks before the event, she had seen Ivan, in her dreams, taking his place among as yet un-

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known companions: outstripping all rivals in brilliance and in popularity. And after the ball, though some of her dreary disappointment had, unquestionably, been for herself, the better part of it, also, had been for the child whose protector she had always been. It was almost a pity that she was so careful never to drag him into the shadows of her life. Had he once surmised them, the two, mother and son, might have found a companionship in sorrow that would mean more to them both than all their separate, painful pretence of happiness—or contentment.

Everything considered, Ivan saw much of his mother; and next to nothing of his father. And because of the apparent mystery with which the Prince was surrounded before his son: his mother's reluctance in speaking of him, the serfs' sign for avoidance of the evil-eye when the master was mentioned, even Monsieur Ludmillo's careful reticence on the subject, Michael came, by degrees, to play a foremost part in his son's imaginings: a part at once heroic and terrible. Ivan knew very well that his father was not a good man: that he frequently did hateful things that seriously hurt his mother. Nevertheless, there was a strong fascination about such a personality. Gigantic, fierce, wild, darkly omniscient, mysteriously terrible, he stalked in a mental lime-light through Ivan's dreams. His existence, in the boyish imagination, was more adventurous than that of any hero of Scheherazade. And perhaps the greatest charm of all was the fact that, in all seriousness, Ivan believed his father actually capable of most of the deeds he arranged in his thoughts.

The boy had been told of his father's importance to the Government; his power in Moscow. But this was a matter to be so much taken for granted that it brought little additional pride. Ivan's imaginary father had long been invested with greater honors than these. He would much have preferred a satisfactory explanation

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of the one point which troubled him mightily: which had filled many of his nights with unsuspected grief, and disturbed his day-dreams while he puzzled, anxiously, over known facts that had become too inconsistent with his beliefs for comfort. That scene enacted in his mother's rooms, at supper, on the evening after the ill-starred ball, when, at his mother's bidding, he had left her, knowing that she wished to keep him from questions that must not be asked, was neither the first such affair that he had seen, nor yet the tenth. He had left the room with hands clinched and his heart burning with anger: anger against—whom? what? The person who brought the look he could not bear into his mother's eyes; the thing that reopened those never-healed wounds he knew she bore within her. And these wounds?—the suffering in her look?—Well, he knew, well enough, of course, that they had all been made by his father! But the father of such deeds was not the embodiment of romance that he had created out of the stuff of dreams! There was, then, another; a reality: terrible, perhaps, but also despicable, and full of things so mean, so low, that he was hardly even to be hated? Already he could feel that hate was a strong passion, not unflattering to its object. But—a man who ill-treated women:—Incredible!

This was Ivan's immediate tangle. And, mercifully, tangle it remained for many years. Only by degrees so gradual that they hardly hurt, did he begin at last to draw away from the ideal, and accept, with whatever reluctance, the real. At the very end, the struggle may have been sharp. But this was simply because the idealized being himself seized and tore away his last shred of illusion, and stood, bare-souled, before the son who could only sit and gaze in horrified, horrible judgment.

It happened in this wise.

Through the years of his son's infancy and boyhood

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Michael Gregoriev, disregarding all thought of his child, saw practically nothing of the boy. He had, in his heart, some faint satisfaction concerning Ivan's sex, mingled with a fancy, gained after one accidental interview, that nevertheless, considering his tastes and traits, Sophia's child should have been a girl. Later, as Ivan began to emerge a little from utter childishness, his father had resorted occasionally to his school-room to search the little dweller there for certain longed-for signs of temperament. Not finding them, he once more put his son away, this time furiously raging that he should have been given a Blashkov heir. Nevertheless, because Ivan was his all, and because the Prince, to his own discomfiture, found himself constantly building careers for a successor, there came again a day when his wild heart turned one last time towards the boy, and, calculating his age, he was astonished to find that his son had passed the first year of his teens.

That summer — the summer of 1854 — Madame Gregoriev, Ivan, and Ludmillo had spent at the Princess' favorite country-place, the tiny estate of Maidonovo, near Klin. Here, in the spot where she had fewest memories of the man whose name she bore, Sophia found that she could, for a few weeks, rally from the weakness, the premonitory pain and its accompanying dread which had lately found definite place in her life. Here the summer skies were of Italian blue; the bells rang through air liquidly golden, perfumed, rich with the murmur of insect life. And here the three, mother, son, and their quiet companion, walked the country-side, watching, first, the hurried sowing, fostering and reaping of the brief-seasoned crops, and then the mad Russian festivals which terminate the frightful summer labor. This year marked itself especially in Ivan's mind; because it was the first in which he began to be haunted by unremembered harmonies and melodies that throbbed again and

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again across his brain till he would rush, in a frenzy, to the piano, and play them swiftly away as one ridding himself of a torment. And it was at this time rather a misery to him than a delight that, within a few hours, they were always back again, driving him to continued pondering over strange mysteries of tone.

It was the end of September before the little party returned to Moscow, driven thither by premonitions of swift-approaching winter. A fortnight more, and, on the seventh of the month, Ivan would enter his fifteenth year. But it was three days before his birthday when the incident occurred which prepared him for its unusual celebration. For while, at dusk on the evening of the fourth day of the month, Ivan sat alone in his music-room, he was approached by Piotr and silently conducted across the building and into the presence of his father.

Michael received his son in his public office: a room which, to the boy, appeared a fitting frame for the figure of the Prince, magnificent in gold-embroidered uniform; booted, spurred, fiery-eyed and fierce-mustached, but for all that showing a softened light in his face as he perceived his son.

Piotr was promptly dismissed, and Ivan seated at the huge table whence he could gaze at the burly figure opposite him as long as his eyes had courage to look up. Nevertheless the pause was uncomfortable enough; and the boy was glad when the silence ended.

"Ivan! you're now at the age at which I entered my first battle—as drummer-boy—and had— Hm! my first love-affair. Are you in love?"

Ivan's velvet eyes lifted themselves slowly to the glittering orbs set in the dark face. No word passed the young lips, but Michael read, plainly enough, the wondering displeasure in the boyish face. Slightly amused, he went on, relentlessly:

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"This week, you're fourteen: a man, in short. Now, what have you done that men can do?"

A fiery reply flew suddenly to the boy's lips; but there it stuck. He could not speak to this man of his mother. Again he chose silence for his answer.

"Nothing? You don't speak? Bah!" Michael brought his fist down upon the table, till everything in the room danced. "Bah! It's a girl I've got! A ninny. A milk-sop.—I thought so! Your lips—your cheeks—*you*—a Gregoriev!" But the glittering eyes, striving to fathom those others, were caught in a sudden quiet depth, wavered for an instant, and—were lowered! Then Michael sat in a frown, elbows on the table, his chin on his hand, thinking. Ivan, meantime, this little feat accomplished, sat waiting, uneasily, for a decision or—a dismissal. He waited for some time; but the end was worth it—perhaps. When his father spoke again, his tone was serious:

"Well, I shall try you, after all. Here, on Thursday—your birthday, mind! you shall meet life. I'll give you a supper, an early one, at ten o'clock. Tell your mother about that from me. But Piotr will come to dress you. I'll have no baby about. He'll bring the suit I command you to wear; and—we'll see.

"Tell your mother, Ivan, that at last—on the seventh of this month, her rule ends. The last Gregoriev becomes a man—or else—he leaves the Gregoriev house! Do you hear? Prepare yourself, then, and—go!"

So, without another look, Michael caught his cloak and cap up from a chair and strode from the room, leaving his son behind him. Presently, however, Piotr came to lead away the dazed and bewildered boy.

Once more in his own room Ivan sat down, in a corner, to think. In the beginning, he could only go over and over the recent scene. Considering it, it seemed almost like some vivid dream, so unnatural had been

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his father's conduct and manner of speech. And himself! How preposterously he had behaved! Not a word, not a single sign of response or comprehension could he remember having given. Certainly his father might very well think him a—"milk-sop," was it, he had said?

For a day or two Ivan lived, in secret, through that scene. And after forty-eight hours it dawned upon him that he was beginning to live in an ever-increasing dread of that approaching supper-party, "at which he was to become a Gregoriev!" Those over-sensitive, over-perceptive young nerves of Ivan's had divined more of his father's mind than Michael believed. And now a sure and certain instinct was warning the boy of danger. Nevertheless—disobey the Prince's command? Ivan shivered. Not appear, on his birthday evening, before the guests that would be—his? Impossible! Well, something he had yet to do. There remained one command of his father's which, up to this moment, he had felt reluctant to follow. This was the message to his mother. Should he take it to her now; or should he not?

Ivan had reached this point in his reverie of the late afternoon of Tuesday, when the Princess came quietly into the room where he sat. With an exclamation, he rose, and went to her; and presently they were seated side by side upon a long divan, Ivan's warm young hand clasped tightly in two that were dry and burning. The boy, relieved, gave a long, quiet sigh; but it was Sophia who began to speak.

"Ivan, yesterday you saw your father?"

"Ah! You *know*, then, mother?"

"Know—what, my son?"

"What—what he said? About my saint's-day supper? Mother, I was to tell you. He said, tell you that, on the seventh—that's the day—your rule is over, and

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I become a Gregoriev. But, oh mother, it's not so, you know!"

This last Ivan added with eager haste; for Sophia, had given a low cry, and her hands so tightened upon his that the grip hurt, rather. But after he had spoken she waited a little, her head bent so that he could not see her face in the twilight. When at last she lifted it to him it was very white; but the lips did not tremble, the voice was steady. "He is to give you a supper on this night? He told you so? Spoke about your manhood—at fourteen?" she added, in a whisper, to herself.

"So he said, Madame. And I did not like it. My father is a very strange man."

"Then, you do not *want* this supper?" her gaze at him was intense, but the dignity had fully returned to it.

To her secret consternation, however, Ivan hesitated. "I—no—yes— Mother, ought I not to want it?"

For some seconds Sophia stared at him, trying to fathom the exact purport of his question. Then her whole aspect changed. She took his two hands and drew them to her breast, and kissed and bowed her head upon them; and presently, though Ivan was clinging to her and demanding explanation, she rose, hastily, and left the room.

Her going was impulsive. That which prompted it had come to her in a sudden flash. Into Ivan's wistful question she had discerned some sense of loyalty towards the other parent; and, in that instant, she was ashamed. After all, he was Michael's own son. Must she, then, be sure that he sought to do the boy harm? Nay, for once in her life she should be brave again. First of all, she must try, as never before, to trust the father of her son. Secondly, she must also trust that son. If Ivan found himself, at the promised supper, in moral danger, he would instinctively know it. Then, if he made no effort to escape, of what use protection, or love, or fear,

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on her part, forevermore? No feminine force could keep him from going, eventually, down the Gregoriev road.

With such reasoning did the woman try to control the secret, rising terror that was on her. It would not be wholly downed; yet she succeeded in keeping her own counsel during the next two days, and in that won a victory greater than she knew. For the Princess never guessed that during this time Michael waited in hourly, ironic expectation of some sort of protest on her part. And neither master nor mistress suspected that, on Wednesday evening, the serfs, kept informed by Piotr, Alexei, and Másha of a little more than all, held solemn conclave in their own house at the back of the inner court-yard. There Michael their lord was duly cursed, their lady in the same way pitied; and, above all, they discussed the possibility of giving the young master some sort of protection at that impending festivity. The matter of open protest to Prince Michael was actually brought up. For, alas! these simple folk knew more than their lady of the usual details of their master's orgies; and the thought of Ivan's participation in the simplest of them was as horrifying to these slaves as to the gentle lady they served. But the bold proposition came at last to nothing. For which of these lame dogs was to beard the lion in his lair?

Wednesday and most of Thursday passed, for mother and son, in a fluctuating succession of every mood known to their respective natures. Finally, on the afternoon of his birthday, Ivan, furious at the indignity, was forced into an hour or two of preparatory rest. But so restless had been his recent nights that his very protests drifted presently into sound unconsciousness, and he only awoke at candle-light, to find Piotr bending over him, and his promised suit, gorgeous even beyond expectation, lying at hand. And here Michael showed a

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touch of his wonderful knowledge of human weakness; for that suit played havoc with Ivan. There was courage to be found in the crimson cloth, interest in the gold embroidery, ardent curiosity in the gleaming boots, an almost swagger in the empty sword-belt. Truly, his Highness had calculated well. By the appointed hour, Ivan was aflame. Once dressed, he relinquished the idea of going to his mother for a parting kiss. He felt, instead, that his "manhood" had already come upon him, and that kisses were for children. Still, it was a relief to find that, had he wished it, his half-promised visit would not have been feasible; for, ere the last buckle was fastened, Sóssha had come to escort his young Prince, with due ceremony, in his first descent into the traditional hell of his fathers.

Ivan was too little of his own blood, a youth too habitually and instinctively pure-minded, to comprehend, in the first glance, that supper scene, and gain therefrom life-long disillusionment. For him, even after he had left it, there remained in some sort a glamour over it all—the softening veil of lights and laughter, the gleam of plate and the perfume of flowers, which successfully hid the blackest ugliness. The first fresh frost was still upon his glass; and through it the golden wine was beautiful as it could not be for those about him, who saw, as it were, through tepid crystal, a flat and nauseous vintage hardly to be borne even for the faint quickening of the blood still to be obtained from it. But with Ivan it was as his mother had hoped. She still sheathed him as in a coat of mail; yet that night the sword of disaster glanced off it as by a miracle only.

Was this man indeed a father who could find place for his boy at such a table, beside the woman who awaited him? who could command the boy in one breath to drain his glass, and Piotr in the next to refill it?

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Within twenty minutes Ivan's head was light with the delicious poison of that exquisite wine. So transparently white grew his skin, so huge and velvety his black eyes, so serious his finely chiselled mouth, that even Celestine and Cerisette began to feel, somewhere beneath that hardened outer shell of "temperament," a disregarded organ filled with a long-forgotten, aching sensation that was not to be encouraged. Regarding the quiet boy whose gold embroidery glittered so bravely in the light, they grew painfully silent; and in that silence secretly reproached the man who put them to such abominable usage. Indeed, Gregoriev himself, always quick to take the temperature of a company, was presently amazed at the tone beginning to prevail over this one. The screaming laughter had been modified; the unquestionable conversations stilled. But the wine, for these very reasons, was flowing faster, as each member of that company sought to deaden those strangely roused sensations which most of them had believed forever dead for them. Gregoriev perceived how many eyes remained fixed reflectively on the white face of the young Prince, in whose eyes was beginning to dawn a look of comprehension. And they saw with fear the gleam of mockery that was glowing in Michael's orbs. The host, indeed, had planned, but found no time in which to execute, a new and daring *coup*, before his son had sprung to his feet, lifted his brimming glass in a hand grown tremulous, and dashed it violently at the nearest wall, where it shattered into splinters, its contents falling, in one heavy, golden mass, upon the rug. Then, mouth set, head erect, he turned from the company and walked steadily out of the room. But, the door once closed behind him, once out of range of his father's mocking eyes, he began to run, madly, through the narrow corridor, into the central hall and up the staircase, whence he presently precipitated himself into

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the bedroom of his mother, who was sitting in a lounging-chair before a blazing fire.

At the unexpected appearance, Sophia rose with a cry. Only the angels could have read all the anguish which that utterance bore from her—all the pent-up misery of a woman tortured during the last hours beyond every power of endurance. High God had heard her at last. Her son had returned to her, unconstrained, of his own will, up from that depth, from that nether hell, to the sounds of which she had been listening for a long hour. But now her boy was clasped within her arms, his suddenly burning cheek pressed to hers, his wine-tainted breath, mingling with her half-restrained sobs as she cried over him only half coherently:

“Ivan—little one—son of my heart—you came back to me!”

“Oh, little mother! Little mother! Keep me safe—from *him*!”

CHAPTER IV

THE CORPS OF CADETS

IN the old, feudal days of quick-spilled blood and easy death, there was a certain fateful, epoch-making cry which had power to carry dread or terror through the high ranks of the official world, while it brought to others exultant hopes of desires and ambitions at last to be fulfilled. It was a cry of life and of death, of the ending of one rule, the beginning of another, consisting of two phrases from which nations took their being; which were cried aloud by men in robes of mingled black and white and punctuated by the breaking of a black, the flourishing of a white, wand. It is the cry with which history ends and begins: "Le Roi est mort! Vive le Roi!"

Now Russia, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was almost Europe in the sixteenth. It was on February 18, 1855, that the reign of the Iron Czar actually came to an end. But the news of his death was made public in Moscow only two days later. For forty-eight hours the sudden closing of that rule, which had been as sombre, as turbulent, as tyrannical as that of any Borgia or Medici, was concealed from the nation. But the morning of the twenty-first found the petty-official world, risen early from sleepless unrest, pushing aside its early tea to re-read the unexpected bulletin from the Hermitage.

High and low, from the Minister of the Interior to the humblest customs inspector, waited, trembling, for the readjustment. But Michael Petrovitch Gregoriev, who, it might have been thought, had good cause for appre-

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hension, came down from his bedroom at the usual hour, shut himself into his sanctum, sat down to stare thoughtfully at a certain portion of his hieroglyphic map, and then, with a deep, relieving sigh, fared vigorously forth to the day's officialdom.

And it soon appeared that Monsieur Gregoriev's confidence was justified. More yet, special favor was shown him. He passed his summer in a long and important journey through Southern Russia, travelling especially through battle-scarred Crimea, and, returning with his report to Moscow, found awaiting him that for which he had vainly intrigued for years. Thus his wife was hastily summoned from her retirement at Baden-Baden, where she had been joyously living with Ivan and her sister; and she returned, drearily, to Moscow, to receive a blow she had never thought to dread.

It was again the evening of October seventh when Ivan, called from the quiet festivity he was enjoying with his mother and Ludmillo, followed Piotr unwillingly into the presence of his father, who awaited him in his official room. Left alone at the closed door, Ivan entered, slowly, and was motioned to a seat opposite his father at the paper-piled table.

For a moment or two Michael regarded him thoughtfully. Then all at once he cried out: "*You* my son! God! What a baby it is!"

Ivan's face flamed and his lips twitched; but, in the end, he held his tongue. After all, did it matter what this man said?

Michael, watching him, and in some measure reading his thought, let his face soften again. "Well, it may be better that way. Listen, Mikhailovitch! I have done for you what has been done for no Gregoriev before. You are to be pushed up the ladder. You're to be ostracized. In the end, you'll find that Petersburg will receive you. They must; for at last I've obtained your

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commission in the Cadet Corps: something that none of our race has ever had. I tried, of course, for the Pages, but that they wouldn't give. Nevertheless, you'll come out an ensign of the line, and I can buy your lieutenancy in a guard regiment within the month. You understand?"

Michael paused, and fixed his keen eyes on the boy who was now on his feet, motionless, his brows knitted. He was a little bewildered by the unexpectedness of the thing. Yet he did understand—tumultuously, what that great news meant.

"When do I leave here?" he asked, presently, in a voice that was strange to him.

"In one week—to the day. There are preparations to be made. You go like the Prince you are. Christ! If *I* had had the chance!"

This last, muttered exclamation, Ivan scarcely heard. He was still staring down at the table, trying to readjust himself, to resolve his thoughts into either joy, or—more difficult—regret. The silence seemed longer than it was. Then Ivan looked up, silently asking permission to go. But he found his father's unholy eyes fixed on him, and instinctively he shrank backward, trying to cover his naked soul from that piercing vision.

"Wait! I've not finished yet. I want you to see just what I'm giving you. I want you to understand the start you're getting. Do you realize that, unless you make an unholy fool of yourself, within four years all Petersburg will be open to you? At twenty you will penetrate to those places to which I—I, with all the—experience, and the intimate knowledge I've got, shall never be admitted. I can buy commissions for you in any regiment. But in the end I don't intend you for the army. Oh, if I could have started you in the Pages Corps! Still, your advance is certain. And this is my first, middle, and last advice to you: walk instantly to

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the very centre of the first high intrigue that presents itself—everywhere. You'll find them even at the Corps—in your first year. For in Russia, Ivan, a full comprehension of that great game means power. Understand, the utterance of such a sentiment would mean Siberia. But this young Alexander is simply a puppy. He's to be influenced by a footman—by a serf! See that you reach him, then. Study him: learn him: absorb him. Then find your own methods and stick to them; stopping at absolutely nothing they may carry you to. It's the stopping, sooner or later, that is the universal mistake: the mistake I've never made—else I should have been in the gutter yet. You begin, Ivan, where I end. I see no limit for you. Petersburg will hold more than one empty portfolio. But you must not look below the highest. Take the Interior for yourself. To-night, Ivan, I, your father, make you Premier of Russia. Am I so careless of my son?"

Once more Michael's gloomy, flashing eyes were fastened upon Ivan's uplifted face; nor was he wholly dissatisfied at the unquestionable interest he perceived in the boy's expression. Ivan, indeed, felt petrified at the vista opened up before him. It seemed as if his father's words were burning themselves into his brain. And yet, even as he waited, quietly, for the dismissal that soon came, these ambitions of his father's for him were succeeded by something all his own: a thing as yet only half understood, and held secret in his heart out of dread of hearing it mocked or of finding it something common to all men. While, then, the words "Premier of Russia" still echoed through his head, there rose upon his inner ear a sudden note of melody, vagrant, sweet and melancholy as the songs of the Steppes. Known song it was not, however; but something unique, as were all the airs that came to him unbidden. Under its influence it was natural that his face should change, and

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soften. But Michael, imagining that rapt expression to be the result of his own words, was well satisfied; and he sent the boy from him so preoccupied with his uncomprehended gift, that the immediate prospect of the new life faded, for the moment, into the dim land of the unimportant Real.

This brief ecstasy of unsought happiness could not last, however. During the ensuing days Ivan was obliged to banish dreams, and yield himself to preparations for that change which, though it should have brought something of eager anticipation to his boy's mind, was really invested with an unreasonable dread: dread rooted no less in a presentiment of his own than in the expression of his mother's face, the morning redness of her eyes, the uncontrollable quiver of her lip. Sophia, indeed, had received a blow that she was not to recover from. But the full misery of her immediate future she could, fortunately, not as yet surmise.

The farewell between Ivan and his quiet tutor was somewhat pathetic. The prospects of the Pole were, in their way, far drearier than those of his pupil. He was an intensely shy man; and yet the thought of leaving the home which had come so perfectly to suit his sensitive temperament, was to him more calamitous than the prospect of finding and fitting himself into another place. On the last morning, master and pupil spoke but little. Ivan sat drearily strumming out one of the nocturnes of that young countryman of Ludmillo's, lately dead but already hailed immortal by a select few, Monsieur Chopin; and the heart-break in its strange harmonies seemed to express all that neither of them dared attempt to say. Fortunately, the strain did not last long. It was barely ten o'clock when Casimir, having imprinted a kiss upon the hand of his Princess, and actually left another on Ivan's scarlet cheek, was driven, with his modest box, away from the familiar portal

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into the unfriendly realms beyond. With him slipped away the first large piece of Ivan's child-world. And the rest of it was not to be long in following.

Of the final clinging of Sophia to her child, the child of her martyrdom, the man-child who must be relinquished now to the world that called to him, who shall write? Torn mother-love stares not out from paper pages, in the cold black and white of print. Poor Princess! She was strong in neither mind nor body. Trained to a fashionable young ladyhood of delicacy, vapors and graceful fainting-fits, there had been little in her married life to build up fortitude and the courage to endure unwelcome griefs. From day to day her little store of bravery had been drawn upon, extravagantly. For in Sophia, fear bred no angry pride, but rather a flat despair. And it had come to a point at last where even the hauteur of her class would no longer suffice to cover the humiliations of her daily life. Now that the final climax had come, it found her quite denuded of all force, all strength, all hope. Her one *raison d'être* was to be removed, her single prop drawn from her. Therefore she fell, quietly, with scarcely a word of protest, only an instant of tottering. This the metaphor. To speak plainly, so complete was her desolation that, outwardly, she betrayed nothing. Ivan was drawn to wonder at it; but he left her, perhaps, with the less anxiety, being too inexperienced in the ways of grief to worry as a woman might have done over this attitude towards their parting. Nevertheless, the memory of their last evening together lay graven so ineffaceably upon Ivan's heart, that he recalled it clearly, in its every incident, during the last hour of his life.

It was a Sunday—the evening of the day of Ludmillo's departure. Ivan had been summoned to his mother's room, where he found her sitting, rather wearily, he thought, before a table on which steamed a brightly

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polished samovar, surrounded by the dishes of a tempting meal, devised by Másha to suit the respective tastes of her lady and the young Prince. Darkness had fallen an hour before, and the room, with its quaint old furniture, tapestry-hung walls, and old oaken floor strewn with Bokhara rugs, was lighted by three swinging-lamps that cast red reflections upon the polished wood of wainscot and floor. Mother and son sat side by side at the table, and, while they ate, made little attempt at conversation. Instinctively, each was waiting for the other to speak.

But the inevitable talk, at thought of which Sophia's heart fluttered till her breath was all but gone, was not allowed a natural beginning. After a time there came from below the first of a crescendo of sounds—that noise of muffled voices, long since familiar to the room. As the sound increased, and the laughter began to be punctuated by clangs of shivering glass, the woman and the boy drew closer together, and began a hasty conversation, each trying to draw the attention of the other away from that which occupied them both irresistibly. It was long before there arrived any diminution in the unholy racket. But at last, by some fortunate caprice, the party evidently decided to leave the house for some place of public amusement; so that, at last, the great palace was wrapped in its wonted, daytime stillness. And in the first minutes of this, Ivan, as if he read his mother's thoughts, grew silent, and turned to her expectantly.

His hope was fulfilled. That night, acting impulsively upon a half-considered plan, Sophia, for the first and last time in her life, laid bare her heart before her son. The boy listened in a silence that grew by degrees from reverent interest to pity, from pity to horror, from horror to absolute fury, till, thinking of the Gregoriev blood that ran in his veins, he longed to tear from his

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breast the heart which had been made to beat by the man below—that father whom he now saw in the full light of truth. It was in that hour that Ivan put away from him forever all childish things. His mother's story, so direfully heightened by reason of all which she left to the intuition and imagination of her listener, suddenly brought him to an understanding of true womanhood that is the portion of very few experienced men. It seemed as if his existence had been enveloped in all that was foul, and wicked, and heart-breakingly pathetic in the world. And afterwards he realized that in that evening was sown in him a seed which was to bear bitter fruit: the seed of the Russian Tosca, that *Herzeleide*, which has stamped every one of the company of illustrious Slavs with an indelible print of melancholy.

Sophia probably did not realize Ivan's capacity for feeling or for pity. Yet she had a purpose in the telling of her story. Ivan, a Gregoriev, must be given the opportunity of knowing how a woman's soul can be killed within her. Then, should he follow the footsteps of his race, his sin would be upon his own head. Nevertheless, she used little art in her tale, and she drew therefrom neither moral nor homily. Of what use either of these? What remonstrance was there that could hold a true Gregoriev from the pursuits of his maturity? At the same time, if Ivan was what she believed him to be, he could read the moral as he ran. She spoke from a bursting heart, and only in small degree relieved herself by speaking. Nor did she mention their approaching parting; for reference to this subject was beyond her. Ivan must divine what he could of her feeling, or he must believe her callous in her great despair.

Meantime the boy had yielded one slender hand to his mother's clasp; the other was tightly clinched. He sat bolt upright, his burning eyes fixed sternly on the wall before him, his face pallid save for the two round

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spots of flaming red that burned high upon his cheek-bones. His heart was throbbing irregularly. And in his brain, amid the chaos of broken ideals, crumbled idols, and all the jumbled facts of his new understanding of misery and of evil:—amid all his strange and vibrant emotions, there thundered gigantically a series of magnificent minor chords forming a motive overpoweringly climatic. It was the same theme of "hope abandoned," which, nearly forty years later, was to open the last movement of his greatest work: that "Tosca Symphony" which has moved the whole world to wondering tears. Many times during the succeeding years it left his memory, and he would try vainly to recall it. But circumstances always rose to bring it again to his mind; till, at last, recurrent pain had fixed it there forever: that world-theme, which had its birth on this first Sunday of his sixteenth year.

It was eleven o'clock when Madame Gregoriev, worn out and trembling with feeling, finally ended her narrative. It was midnight before she and Ivan kissed good-night. During that whole hour, neither one of them uttered a word. Ivan had sunk to the floor at his mother's feet, his head in her lap, his burning hands clasped in her icy ones, his throat contracting ever and again with the dry, gasping sob of extreme emotion. Sophia, on the contrary, sat above him, her head lifted, her pale face calm, her tearless eyes gazing off into some far country of her own. Yet before their minds lay the same picture—that of a woman's woe: a petty thing, the commonest of all affairs in the man-ruled world, yet hardly a thing to be discussed. Some reverence, or understanding, must be granted it by the dullest mind. So, as the distant voice of Moscow's great bell boomed its twelve strokes, Ivan rose, slowly, as one still in his dream; went for a moment into the mother-clasp; and then, still without speaking, turned to pass, for the last

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night, down the corridor leading to the distant wing in which were his own rooms.

It was on a Monday—beginning of the working week—the morning of October fourteenth in the year 1855, that Ivan went out into the world. His flight was not far: merely to the other end of Moscow; but it led into a life that he had been unable to imagine in the smallest detail. Once there, it took him less than a week to perceive that, while his vague hopes of companionship were scarcely to be realized, he was to drink to its dregs his preconceived cup of unhappiness.

The four great *Corps des Cadets*, created in the mid-reign of the Iron Czar, had been devised especially for the preparation of youthful Russian nobility for their respective places in the military, possibly the official, world. As it presently turned out, these great schools were destined to become hot-beds of tyranny, intrigue, rivalry, caste-feeling, and snobbery in their worst forms. Hence, considering the certain future of each cadet, the Corps afforded an even more adequate preparation for bureaucratic methods than their creator had had reason to expect. In the Moscow institution every inmate, from its head, Colonel Becker, to the youngest boy of the fourth class, was subject to a government of favoritism, bribery, deceit, and the pettiest meanness, in which was no room whatever for advancement along the lines of conscientious work, honesty, or honor. Here prestige of birth, or aptitude for intrigue, carried all before them; for this was, indeed, the period of the worst mismanagement these schools were to know. In later years the Liberator found time to look to them. At present—in the Moscow Corps, Sitsky, “Cock” of the school, a vicious dunce of twenty, would never be called upon to yield his position to Kashkarev, a brilliant scholar and a thoroughly scrupulous boy of eighteen,

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who was generally despised because his grandfather had been a Pole.

In this gathering, where all were in some degree noble, the distinctions drawn by the boys themselves between lineage and wealth, political prestige and the quiet conservatism of lofty birth, were so arbitrary, so contradictory, so innately Russian, that the very masters, who, from Becker down, were German, did not pretend to understand the system, but blindly followed the lead of the scholars and their truculent head. And, to those who have had any experience at such hands, it is bitterly plain that of all merciless cruelty of civilized lands, that of boys under twenty-five is the most remorseless.

It is, then, not difficult to understand that, from the first days, Ivan was in a situation undreamed-of even by his father. In the immediate beginning Becker, awed by his knowledge of the enormous power wielded by Prince Michael, would have treated Michael's son with some sort of consideration. He was soon shown his mistake. The boys he was supposed to teach had none of them, as yet, ever come under the eye of the mysterious, hardly-credited "Third Section." Upon the day following Ivan's arrival, therefore, there was held, in the dormitory inhabited by the upper ten of the dreaded "first class," a solemn conclave, headed by the lords of the school: Sitsky, Sabléf, Osínin, Pryanishikoff, and Blashkov—this last actually a second cousin of Ivan. The decision resulting from the debate, held when the lower school was at drill, was spread abroad without delay by certain methods known only to the boys. By nightfall every cadet knew that young Gregoriev's status had been fixed; and henceforth none would dream of disputing it till the boy in question had passed his second year. By the third day the masters had read and accepted the decree, quietly assigning the new boy to his destined oblivion. For Ivan was a Gregoriev, son of a

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trans-Moskva house, and had never even seen the Equerries' Quarter! grandson, moreover, of a creature who had *worked*. Worse yet, he was the son of what was really no more than a police officer. (For, though officialdom meant much in their ranks, the police was beyond the pale of their bigoted respect.) Thus it is easy to recognize Ivan's natural place, and why he must henceforth regard himself honored if a member of the upper school so much as addressed to him a command. This much the week decided. But it was Sunday night before active persecution began.

Boys' schools, be they in what country they may, are as much alike as boy nature is alike and unalterable the world over, from age to age. Only the details differ. At Rugby, new boys undergo blanket-tossing. In France there is a custom less vigorous though physically more painful. In the Moscow *Corps des Cadets*, in the fifties, matters were as much more savage as Russian civilization was, at that day, lower than that of England. In the Kishinaia, then, the popular form of hazing is—or was—the “circus”; and the pretty game was ordinarily arranged for several victims. But Ivan was accorded a distinction, inasmuch as the boys of his form positively refused to soil themselves by contact with a rank outsider; and the upper school could not but condone its inferiors in their aristocratic aloofness. Having, then, but one victim for the evening's sport, it was thought fitting that some unusual climax should be invented for the furtherance of the school ideals. And this touch was finally invented by a youth who had just finished a certain forbidden book relating to some unspeakable customs of the Orient.

Ivan's Sunday evening shall know no record here. He bore it, lived through it—even infuriated his tormentors by his insistent refusals to cry out or beg for mercy: choosing, instead, meanly to faint just before the crucial

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moment. But though it was a week before he crept shakily from his bed again, there was no inquiry in the school as to the cause of his peculiar illness. Only in secret was some notice taken of the affair; which had really gone beyond ordinary bounds. Colonel Becker gave Ivan more than one hour of serious consideration; for to him Ivan's father was more than a name. And, in the end, the boy was granted what his mother had hitherto vainly asked: leave to spend thirty-six hours, weekly—from Saturday night to Monday morning—at home, in his mother's company. It was a wise decision, and it served a double purpose; for not only did it remove a sure victim from the band of savages that held possession of the school through every weekly holiday, but it gave one miserable boy just enough respite from his wretchedness to stifle the revelations which time and suffering would otherwise have surely brought. Even so, at first, Becker trembled lest the terrible Chief should be made aware of his son's treatment at that noted school. But weeks passed and no complaint was made. And thus came Ivan's first step towards favor. For Becker could not but be thankful for the boy's brave silence; nor thereafter did he always try to hide that gratitude from the unhappiest of his pupils.

Such was the beginning of Ivan's school life. It had taken just seven days to teach him that the curse of his parentage must still be his heavy burden. He had done infinitely more than was generally required to prove a boy's worthiness for acceptance by his fellows. Not a boy in the school but had watched his clothes cut to ribbons before them, under the knout. Not a boy but surmised the hideous state of his bruised body. And yet, not a boy in the school offered the slightest sign of friendliness, even of recognition. Loneliness he had known—was, indeed, to know again—but never there-

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after the loneliness that he endured in this crowded school.

Of what Ivan bore during his first year in that harsh preparation for his after life, it would be useless to write. The day's routine was long and hard: its hours from early morning till nine at night; its subjects the usual studies, with military drill, tactics, and history. Moreover, at the end of the ordered day there was frequently guard-duty at the door of the first form's secret club, which used pretended fear of discovery as a means of keeping some younger boy awake till he should fall asleep on his feet, and be carried into the club-room for the punishment always inflicted for this military crime of "sleeping on duty." This year the fourth form had one more cause of gratitude for the existence of Ivan; for he was chosen for this vigil three nights to any other boy's one. The consequence of this was that, between October and April, he was in the hospital four times, always owing to an increase in the low fever induced by physical and mental exhaustion. Through the winter, Becker had made a few feeble attempts at protection, all of which proved abortive. But finally, in the early spring, noting Ivan's look of frailty, and fearing a breakdown that must be brought to the notice of Prince Michael, he took the case in hand vigorously, and procured for the boy at least unbroken sleep at night, though he could force no other consideration from the scornful young brutes towards their physically broken, mentally-raging victim.

It was, for Ivan, an added irony of Fate that, during this long period of physical strain, the severest he was ever to know, his one hitherto unfailing refuge should be denied him. And the trial culminated in a shock as unexpected as it then seemed unendurable.

For many weeks the boy, while sedulously concealing the facts of his school life, had nevertheless wondered

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that, during his Sundays with her, his mother divined none of his unhappiness. But he himself failed to perceive the burden which that same mother, hitherto as near to him as he to her, was herself bearing. How should he guess that she was at last obliged to concentrate her every faculty upon herself in order to keep from him any betrayal of her condition? Ivan had, certainly, more than once remarked the haggard pallor of her face; or caught her in an involuntary movement of pain. There were nights at school when he thought long and anxiously of her. Yet he was thoroughly unprepared when, on the morning of the third of April, he received from her a brief, strained, unnatural note, containing the astounding information that she was starting at once, with his aunt, for the Riviera, where she might remain for some weeks.

He had the day to ponder over this news: reserving the greater pain of it for the night: when, happily, he should be unmolested. But he never came to this; for, at the end of the evening study-period, he was called from the assembly-hall by no less a person than Colonel Becker himself, at the door of whose dreaded room stood Piotr, white-faced and red-eyed. At his appearance Ivan halted for one, heart-stilling instant. Then he muttered, in a hoarse, dry voice:

“My mother!—She is dead?”

Piotr slowly shook his head, replying: “Not yet.—They have sent for you.”

CHAPTER V

DEATH JOY

DURING that long winter when the mental eyes of Ivan were first opening to the meaning of life and the individual struggles of each to find his place in a world apparently unassailable, Ivan's mother, Princess Sophia, slowly, in great anguish of body, was learning a last lesson of the master by whom she had never been spared. Through that dark period, though mother and son met weekly, their intercourse, hitherto so full, so unreserved, became inevitably hesitant and broken. Each was bearing a burden which neither was willing to reveal to the other. Ivan, concealing from the tender woman every sign of his persecution at the hands of his companions in the Corps, felt himself constantly tongue-tied before her. And though ordinarily the mother-sense would speedily have penetrated that awkward reserve, Sophia, herself all unaccustomed to deceit, was so fully occupied in hiding every sign of her own secret, that Ivan's reticence appeared to her only the reflection of her own. It was as natural, then, as it was unfortunate, that these visits, looked forward to by each of them as bright oases in an otherwise treeless desert, should also have brought with them their quota of discomfort and vain regret. Throughout each week, woman and boy alike hungered for each other. Yet on Sunday night both usually parted with hearts overflowing with secret remorse at the thought that there was actual relief in the knowledge that the day was over.

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Moreover, as the weeks passed, the Sunday evenings together became shorter and more short. Madame Gregoriev, smiling through the agony that yet found place in every line of her face, would confess to fatigue and would resign herself to the hands of the maid whose duties were daily becoming more those of a nurse, leaving Ivan to the care of the serfs, who, by their unfeigned delight in his appearance, generally sent him away from their quarters about midnight in a very cheerful mood. Later, however, through the dark hours that followed, Ivan's thoughts instinctively reverted to his mother, and the strange expression in her face would take a significance filling his heart with a pain which the morrow's light could not banish.

Months slid by. The Russian New Year came and went. And now, when Ivan reached home on Saturday evening, his mother frequently greeted him from her bed; and on Sunday would sit up only for an hour or two, in her *chaise-longue*, before the open fire always kept burning in her up-stairs sitting-room, her frail form clad in the loosest of negligées. Still, to all the boy's sad and anxious queries, the reply would be: "Just fatigue, and perhaps a little cold. In a few weeks, you shall see me quite strong again. Smile for me, Ivan!" And Ivan seemed to accept the words. But weekly he went back to his work with something added to the weight now constantly dragging at his heart.

Had Ivan guessed half the truth, however: could he have had one glimpse of his mother's reason for her constant "fatigue," he would have learned that the vague disquiet he was bearing was a feather-weight in comparison to the helpless misery of watching and comprehending the slow spread and increase of the most pitiless, direfully cruel, of all diseases.

It had been in the very first week of Ivan's life in the Corps that Sophia Ivanovna returned, in a kind of numb

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haze, from the house of the doctor she had gone to for examination. She stood alone in her own room, trying to comprehend the fulness of that which had come upon her. All alone she had made her discovery; and alone had gone to have it verified. But, in spite of everything, realization was difficult: the realization that, turn whither she would, there was upon her—upon that poor, tortured breast, the relentless clutch of death. Struggle as she might, through the ensuing months—the few, few ensuing months, that clutch must grow tighter and more cruelly tight, until—the end. During the years since her marriage Madame Gregoriev had, more than once, wished—nay, prayed for death. But a hopeless desire and the inevitable reality are generally two widely different things. And the clearest possible proof of the poignancy of the mental suffering of her past life lay in the fact that, fully understanding her position, it was a matter of only a few hours before she could accept, with some show of tranquillity, this last incident of, this fitting climax to, her long tragedy.

From the first, she kept her knowledge to herself. The doctor who had examined her had not been requested to take up the case; and as yet, she asked help of none. It was weeks before old Másha, coming, one afternoon, into the Princess' rooms with tea, found her mistress on her knees before the ikon, passionately demanding strength for continued silence. The old woman, struck suddenly dumb with intuition, waited only till the dread name had come from Sophia's lips, and then burst into a wild wailing—that long-drawn cry for the dead, characteristic of the Russian peasant. The Princess demanded, implored, finally threatened her old servitor, till the promise of secrecy had been obtained; but she guessed that Másha had not given it till she had assured herself that the disease could not be concealed much longer.

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Hitherto, in that bleak and lonely household, there had been little comfort for the woman who knew no hour, no second, free from pain. But Másha, like many country-bred women, was skilled in the decoction of those herbs and simples that seem, at times, more efficacious than more scientific medicines. Moreover, the old woman was passionately devoted to the mistress whom she had tended as a child, and nursed through every illness of girlhood. Thenceforth Sophia was the recipient of the tenderest care; and the old serf, experimenting, found more than one preparation which, for a time at least, seemed to draw some of the fiery agony from the poor, disfigured breast.

As the winter passed, however, and March drew towards its close, the Princess, wasted almost to a shadow, left her bed no more. Thus at last her husband awoke to the fact that her illness was no mere "woman's nonsense." Their first brief interview terminated when, in response to his direct questions, Sophia simply drew the covering from her breast and let him look upon the hideous source of her pain. The man bent over her, stared for a moment, shuddered, and, turning on his heel, left the room without a word. Early upon the morning of the following day, that of March thirty-first, to Sophia's amazed displeasure, the two most eminent physicians in Moscow met at her bedside. At the conclusion of their examination they were ushered below, to the Prince's cabinet, where they gave Michael their decision as to the necessary course of action. There must be an immediate operation. That was the one possible hope. Even so—it was a pity, a very *great* pity, that the *gnädige Frau* had waited so long. By now, every day—almost every hour—diminished the chance of recovery.

After this explanation, made by the German doctor and entirely corroborated by his Russian colleague,

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there was a silence. Prince Gregoriev sat bent over the table. A grayish tinge, absolutely foreign to it, had overspread his face. His eyes were flaming. His teeth gnawed savagely at the ends of his mustache. The two physicians waited, considerably, till the lowered head was raised, the eyes lifted:

"There is—no other way? She—she has got to submit to the knife?"

"Gewiss! Nor can we promise — recovery — even so. Without it—two weeks—a month, perhaps!" he shrugged, helplessly. "You understand, it is medullary: the most rapid, the most malignant variety of all. It is not a case that promises credit to us. Therefore, if the Herr Graf would wish to try another physician, I should be glad that it were so. I would resign the case willingly; for this disease gives little satisfaction to us who love our work."

"At the same time," broke in Monsieur Petchkoff, the Russian doctor, with some asperity, "we must remind our client, Herr Weimann, that operations to-day do not mean what they did before the recent great discovery of anæsthetics. I have been using chloroform now for more than three years; and in every case where the heart permits, it has obliterated entirely the pain of incision. You understand that the patient may go to sleep in her bed and awaken there again, a few hours later, without the slightest knowledge that she has ever been removed from it. Consider that, your Highness!"

Gregoriev leaped to his feet. "Is it possible? I never believed those tales. Do you corroborate this statement?" he added, turning to Weimann, who sat approvingly nodding his head.

At the question he merely raised his shaggy brows, replying: "Without doubt, Herr Graf. Anæsthesia is now used in every enlightened country in the world. The Herr Doctor has exaggerated its benefits in no particular."

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Gregoriev sank into his place again with a groan of relief. "Operate, then! Operate at once—to-day, if there be time!"

Prince Michael's desire, which was, in fact, that of his wife also, since the thing must be gone through, was impractical, owing to the fact that considerable preparatory work was still necessary. On the first day of the new month, Weimann made an examination of her heart, which resulted less satisfactorily than he had hoped. Not until evening did he finally announce his decision that the administration of chloroform might be made without undue danger. And after this there were still to be made those preparations necessary for an operation in the palace: Michael absolutely refusing his wife's request that she be taken to the Royal Hospital. Nor was it till the evening of that day—the second of April—that the unhappy lady wrote Ivan her scarcely deceptive letter: an act repellent to her, but insisted upon by Michael, who persisted in maintaining his belief in her ultimate recovery. With what an agony of yearning to see her boy, to bid him good-bye, the poor soul hung upon each painfully scrawled word, only those who have lain under the chill of death can know. From the first she had no hope, and but little desire, of leaving the dread table alive. Yet she was loath to give expression to the doubt that might still be hailed by her husband with his old, scornful mockery.

It was the first time, perhaps, that she had misjudged Michael on the side of inhumanity. Scorn for her was gone from him now; and so changed was he that his very servants could not read him. Was it remorse, or actually some long-latent affection, reawakened under the shadow of impending loss, that had brought the haggard lines about his mouth, and dulled the fires of those terrible eyes? Sophia herself asked that question

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of the darkness, as she lay the long night through, watching for what she dreamed of as her last dawn.

The hour of the operation was fixed for one o'clock on the afternoon of April third. By dawn of that day the whole household was astir, gravitating, for the first time in many a year, wholly about the bedroom of the mistress of the house. Madame Gregoriev, lying motionless in the half-light of her room during the morning hours, preceding the impending ordeal, was filled with a sense of unreality, of wonder at the stir that was suddenly being created about her. For years she had been accustomed to a life of systematic neglect. For months she had borne her bodily torment silently and without hope of aid. Now, in one day, as it seemed, she had become the centre of a new world. There were two professional nurses to anticipate her every want, while old Másha, hitherto her one attendant, cowered snuffing in a dark corner of the room. At her bedside her husband, his black eyes dulled with trouble, sat side by side with Vassily, the brother, whose manner had never before so softened in addressing her. And his voice grew husky as he persisted in the assurances of perfect recovery that he could not himself believe. Lastly, and best of all, Caroline was coming: was, indeed, already on her rapid way. All things had been done for her comfort; yet none of them weighed for a moment in the balance with her one, great, unvoiced desire: the desire to see and talk to her boy before she yielded herself to that mysterious unconsciousness from which she had not the smallest hope of emerging. But she was now wholly under Michael's sway. She realized that he was acting for Ivan's peace of mind: that in so acting he had himself some hope of her recovery. And, remembering his new consideration for her, she could not bring herself to dispute him. When, at the hour named, the surgeons and their assistants entered her room, she received the

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kisses of husband and brother upon an unwrinkled brow; and, as she lifted her head towards the sweet-smelling sponge, there was a faint smile upon her lips, a gleam of relief in her tired eyes.

Vassily Blashkov and his black brother-in-law waited together at Sophia's bedside till her unconsciousness was complete; and then both stood, reverently, while the limp body was carried from the room. For the first time in their lives these two utterly selfish men looked into each other's eyes with but one comprehensive thought, which was all for another. Each man was suddenly white with unwonted feeling; for there was something in the pose of that helpless form which brought home, with a poignant stab, a sudden realization of her neglected life.

Still acting upon common impulse the two presently descended, side by side, to Michael's official room, where, on the table, Piotr had placed a bottle of sherry, some glasses, and a plate of biscuits. Before these the two seated themselves; and, as the first glow of the wine began to course through them, they fell into a low-voiced conversation; for it was a period of strain so great that any possibility of forgetfulness was grasped, eagerly. Of Sophia, however, neither could speak; and their thoughts fell naturally upon that which was dearest to her: Ivan: the nephew to whom the uncle was almost a complete stranger. And it was to this man whom for years he had hated so roundly, that Michael revealed, for the only time in his life, his feeling for the boy whom he had so tardily and slightly acknowledged.

"You—haven't told him, I understand?" Blashkov began, in a low tone.

"Not yet. If—if she comes out—he may see her. The anxiety will be less for him.—She—she's his whole life, here."

"And he hers, I imagine?"

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"It's true.—I—I haven't counted with either of them.—I never tried."

This was all. The long, almost unbearable pause that followed was broken by a commonplace remark, and the conversation kept in that vein by mutual consent. For, when the inner life is throbbing fast and strong, intimate expression becomes impossible. And above these two men, chatting about the trivial things of their existence, hung a black shadow of dread: a strain of waiting which, minute by minute, grew more tense.

An hour had passed, and the ears of both were strained for the faintest sound in the corridor, when there came an unhopèd-for break. Less than forty-eight hours after the first news had reached her in Petersburg, Caroline Dravikine entered the Gregoriev house in Moscow. Piotr, his face alight with relief, showed her into the room where brother and brother-in-law sat together. There she flung off her wraps, commanded tea, and exerted all her power towards distracting the thoughts of those two men who showed not half her courage in the face of a calamity which could touch neither of them as it must touch her, who had kept the one greatly unselfish affection of her life for the sister now lying at the point of death above her.

A second hour slipped round, and the momentary relief of Caroline's arrival passed. The darkening room had grown silent again, and the sense of oppression was becoming unendurable to the three of them, when one of the nurses slipped into the room to say:

"The Princess Gregoriev is in her bed. You can see her if you wish.

A woman's whisper broke the twilight: "Thank God! —Thank God!—She is conscious? She is safe?"

"She cannot be conscious for some hours yet, Madame. —The operation has been a terribly difficult one. Her Ladyship's condition is critical."

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Silence. Then a faint groan from Michael's chair.

There followed six hours of waiting, watching, hoping, despairing. The deadened consciousness trembled on the edge of the great void; and neither doctor, nurse, nor relative left the still room in which the soul still delayed. Now and again, after the administration of some stimulant, one of the three, Michael, Vassily, or Caroline would whisper a question, hoping always for an answer suggestive of hope. But the reply was always the same:

"We cannot tell.—Wait."

It was nine o'clock at night before the body stirred naturally for the first time, and a long, fluttering sigh broke from the pallid lips. From Caroline came a faint cry of joy; and then Sophia's great eyes opened, languidly, and her look was turned upon her sister.

"Mother!" she whispered, smiling.

"No, Sophie!—No!"

But Weimann was at her elbow. "Do not contradict!" he murmured. Then he turned to Michael.

"You have a son?" he said, quietly.

"Yes!—You mean—" Michael's face had not held this look before.

"He should be here," said the doctor, steadily. "I think she will know you all—yet."

Prince Gregoriev bowed his head upon his breast, and stole from the room. Ten minutes later Piotr was speeding across Moscow in his master's brougham, towards the *Corps des Cadets*.

Of that long drive homeward across the city, Ivan's only memory was of a long blur of pain that culminated, as they halted at the portals, in a sudden burst of realization. His eyes, tear-shrouded as they were, sought the well-known window on the second floor from which his mother's face had so often greeted him or smiled

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down a farewell for one more week.—Yes, the window was alight! Then—then she was still— Great God! How did human senses bear such grief as was swelling through him now?

Within the gloomily lighted hall Ivan found himself, quite unexpectedly, face to face with his father, who was apparently awaiting him. Until this moment Ivan had forgotten the very existence of Prince Michael; but now he was startled at the drawn and haggard face that presented itself in the lamp-light, as his father seized him by the arm, and, whispering a few words of the explanation that brought Ivan's heart into his throat, drew him swiftly up-stairs, to the threshold of her room, and there turned, leaving him alone.

Five minutes before the priest, his last rites accomplished, had passed out of the doorway on which the boy now halted, straining his eyes into the room beyond. He saw a bed surrounded by silent figures; and only then became conscious of the meaning of the sound that had filled his ears since his coming: the high, long-drawn, wailing of Sophia's piteous struggle for breath. Immediately over her hung Weimann and one of the nurses, just finishing an injection of strychnine. At the foot of the bed sat Madame Dravikine, white, silent, dry-eyed. Across the room, before the largest of the three ikons, knelt Sonya and old Másha, praying, silently. And upon them all, even the deathlike figure on the bed, was an air of listening, of waiting, of expectancy, which was presently relieved by the apparition of the tall, lean, boyish figure, who wavered for one moment, and then came hurriedly forward.

Ivan was scarcely conscious of his movements. His limbs were trembling, his hands were icy cold and damp with sweat, his tightened throat seemed as if it must break the drawn muscles in its straining. But his great black eyes shone tearless as he walked straight to the

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bed and stood gazing down upon the quivering face upturned to him. Then, after a moment of preparation, the dreadful breathing ceased, and a faint, shaking voice replaced it:

"Ivan! Dearest! You have come!"

Taking his mother's transparent hands with a movement of infinite gentleness into his own, Ivan dropped upon his knees by the bedside, his two eyes still fixed longingly, hungrily, upon the beloved face. For an instant he was conscious that others in the room were stealing away, and presently, save for one nurse, he was alone with her who, sixteen years before, had brought him into the world.

In the silence that surrounded him Ivan felt his very soul pierced by a medley of unknown emotions, chief of which was the sense that he stood alone and helpless before a separation that he could not bear. And presently that dread was voiced for him, in the strange, weak, tender tones of his mother's voice:

"I must leave you soon now, Ivan."

At last a sob tore its way through his rigid throat, and his answer was given in a passionate whisper: "No, mother! No!"

"Dear, my body is going. You could not wish to keep me always. And I am so glad, Ivan! So glad! My own mother has been here, at my side, all day. So, then, I shall come and comfort you—at least at the first, while it is most sad for you."

"'At first!' Do you think I can stop wanting you, grieving for you—ever?"

She could smile, that dying one, in her great wisdom, at this passionate repudiation of the balm of time. To her, it appeared, the secrets of the dead had been already revealed. "You are still very young, dear boy. None of us of the world can escape this pain of parting. 'Death is the last enemy that shall be overcome.' The

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time is not long, Ivan, before you will take on man's full estate. Shall you remember then what I, your mother, have suffered—through a man?—through your father, Ivan?"

His expression turned to one of surprise. Never had she spoken, even indirectly, on this subject to him before. But he answered at once: "Yes, mother. I know. I shall remember."

"Ah, yes—keep that remembrance—all of it! You will be a man of power, of influence. When you marry a good woman, Ivan, then think of me most of all. You have in you Gregoriev blood, and all Gregorievs have been like your father. You must change that, break that tradition. Will you remember? Will you—pro—"

The speech had been a long one, and, syllable by syllable, her voice had been growing weaker. Now, with a word half uttered, she settled back, gasping violently, her eyes half shut. Ivan started to his feet; but already the nurse was by the bed, forcing cognac and water down the Princess' throat. Ivan stood still, tightly clasping one of those chilly hands. He was waiting anxiously for her to speak again; for to him their talk was not finished. His mother, however, seemed to think differently. Her hand tightened upon his, but she had the air of one satisfied, content with all things. The boy, watching her, understood that she desired nothing more.

Presently the others stole softly in again, and Sophia drew her sister, by a look, to the bed, beside Ivan, and made one more effort of speech:

"Katrisha—remember—Ivan. He is—mine. When he—goes—to Petersburg—care for him—for—my sake!"

"Ah, yes, Moussia! Yes! Ivan shall be cared for—well!" murmured Caroline, brokenly.

Sophia, her dim eyes resting on them both, smiled.

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In the midst of this came an interruption. The smile vanished, and a gleam of dread crossed the face of the Princess, who had started forward a little, and seemed to listen. Indeed, there was the sound of a muffled tread approaching the door. Another instant, and Michael, entering, went to the bedside, and stood looking down upon his wife. White and strange was his face, and Madame Dravikine perceived that his hands were trembling. She saw also, however, how Sophia drew away from him, how the labor of her breathing was increased. Every one in the room started when the dying woman's right hand was raised from the sheet and pointed at the dark and powerful figure bending near.

"You—who have ruined my life—go! Let me die—at last—in peace!" she said, all the silent torture of her wifehood sounding through the wavering, feeble voice.

Michael Gregoriev, with a violent start, drew back. He passed his hand once across his face; then, straightening suddenly, and without another look at the figure on the bed, he turned and strode from the room, leaving the door open.

Behind him, silence fell again. Sophia's breathing and the faint mutter of old Másha's prayers mingled with the wailing of the wind as it rushed round the corner of the house, and the pelt of freezing rain on the windows. In the half-lighted room no one either moved or spoke. Minutes passed. Half an hour. Ivan, standing on his feet, grew desperately nervous and weary. Madame Dravikine, seated in a corner, leaned back in her chair and let her heavy eyelids fall.

Presently, out of the night, came the voice of Ivan Veliki, from the distant Kremlin, booming the eleventh hour. As the last stroke trembled through the room and echoed into silence, Sophia Gregoriev lifted herself suddenly to a sitting posture. Her eyes widened, joyously, upon some distant scene, and a cry of ecstatic

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wonder broke from her lips. Then, in a breath, the divine light faded. The lips fell apart. It was her son who caught her as she fell.

Yet death held something still in store. Minutes later, as Ivan lifted himself heavily from his kneeling-place beside the bed, and gazed, through tear-filmed eyes, upon the face of his dead, there broke from him a little cry, a cry of joy. In its passage to freedom his mother's soul had stamped her visage with its state. From that face the lines of many years of anguish, mental and physical, had fallen away, leaving the flesh as smooth and fair as that of a girl. The eyes were lightly closed; and, most beautiful of all, her lips had slowly spread into a smile of such transfigured radiance as sent a thrill of intense and wistful longing through the hearts of those that looked on her.

The tragedy of Sophia Gregoriev was at an end; and none seeing her could doubt that she had found in the Unknown Land ample reason and compensation for her life on earth.

CHAPTER VI

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THERE is a certain maxim, unpleasant as it is prevalent, indulged in with great frequency by a certain class of stoical sophists, to the effect that there are many sorrows in life more difficult to bear than that separation from our nearest brought by death. But those men—and especially the women—who have experienced sorrow of both varieties, do not use that proverb.

In his after life Ivan Gregoriev was called upon to bear many burdens of grief; but none of them ever caused him to waver in the assurance that the death of his mother had brought him the bitterest suffering he could be called upon to endure. Before this time—for many recent weeks—he had believed himself cognizant of most forms of unhappiness. So, in a blind, insensate fashion, he was. But the night on which his mother left him opened his eyes to that land of grief where consolation waits on time; it shook from him the last vestige of morbidity; and, lastly, it brought him, too, in generous measure, perception of those beauties of thought and action to be gained by one who accepts his loss unselfishly, in a true and humble spirit.

During the three days that passed before the funeral, Ivan, his brain dulled and heavy with a kind of morbid despair, haunted the room where his mother lay, surrounded with candles the lights of which illumined and intensified the smile of transfiguration still remaining on her peaceful face. To the boy, waiting and watching

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dumbly, it seemed intolerable that the stillness of that sacred room should be disturbed by the exits and entrances of strangers. In the beginning, he resented even the arrival from her Petersburg convent of his cousin Nathalie; and for the many members of the Blashkov family, distant relatives or mere acquaintances, who throughout her life had left Sophia to bitter loneliness, and came now to stare upon her empty frame, the son felt a hatred too fierce to be expressed in words. They, however, neither knew nor would have cared to learn how the boy heard their every word concerning him and his with wrath unspeakable, and shuddered with misery at their heartless insolence. Nevertheless, the wretchedness hidden under his set, strained mask, was divined by his aunt. Thus, she, for the time much softened by her grief, and feeling also a good deal of curiosity concerning the inner nature of this youth of the haunted eyes, presently sought, by every art of tact and seeming understanding, to open his heart to tears. The fact that she at length succeeded, must be put down to her lasting credit; it having been a deed directly opposed to the traits of her rather cold nature.

Upon the evening after the funeral Madame Dravikine, intensely wearied by the long walk to and from the cemetery, was lying on her couch, eyes closed, her head aching slightly. Nevertheless, when there came a timid knock upon her door, she answered with a summons to enter, and Ivan, responding, went to her impetuously, yielded his hands to her clasp, and allowed himself to be drawn to his knees, at her side, there to listen to gentle words about his mother's love for him, and her ambitions for his future, till she had pierced through the armor of his reserve, and he burst into a storm of sobs the violence of which at first frightened her.

It was the one possible means of relief, however; and

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Madame Dravikine, wise in her generation, let him weep his bitter revolt away. This lasted nearly an hour, and both were exhausted by the time the tears had ceased, and only an occasional, spasmodic sob gave evidence of the storm that had passed. It was at this juncture—Ivan upon the floor, half sitting, half kneeling, Caroline's arms clasping him close—that the door of the room opened again, quietly, and Nathalie appeared. At sight of the two she halted, uncertainly. But her mother, gently releasing the embarrassed boy, bade her come in; nor when, an instant later, he made the move, would she permit Ivan to go. It was, perhaps, unfair to her that this kindly act of hers should have borne, for all three of them, consequences so momentous, and, to the Countess, so unwelcome. Yet it was certainly this evening which saw the beginning of the single real passion of Ivan's life. Thereafter, in that little gallery of mental portraits carried by each of us in his intimate heart, the beloved form of his dead mother was given a companion picture: that of a girl's face, warm and living, upon which he often gazed with an ardor, a devotion, a longing, rather unboyishly sincere.

Certainly the picture thus enshrined was one not unworthy of strong admiration. For even at fourteen Nathalie Dravikine was very beautiful, in a delicate, flower-like way. Her complexion was clear and pale, the blood which ran beneath it showing only under the stress of some emotion, when it would suffuse her whole face with waves of exquisite color. Her delicate head bore a weight, almost too great, of fine, blue-black hair, just now hanging in a heavy plait to her knees. Her eyes, large and velvety as Ivan's own, were, however, of a shade indescribable, chameleon-like: one day varying between beryl and aqua-marine, anon of a light hazel, and finally, in moments of excitement, grief, or joy, of a deep, baffling black. Hitherto, Ivan had been unde-

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cided about their color; but to-night, as he saw them run their gamut from light to that tender dark, he felt a strange, quivering half-fear, half-joy, stirring his heart; and in one moment it had become impossible for him to look her in the eyes again and retain any sort of composure. Moreover, as he sat, red-eyed and conscious, in a chair between aunt and cousin, it seemed to him as if some one were pouring a cool balm over the burning wound within him: as if, already, his mother's strange promise were finding fulfilment, and she herself, or her fair spirit, stood at his side, her gentle hand upon his shoulder, a smile of the old, loving companionship in her deep eyes. He did not know whether it were minutes or hours before, with a long sigh, he rose, kissed his aunt, drew back with flaming face from Nathalie's tentative advance, but finally, with throbbing heart, just touched her cheek in the usual place, and then ran off, glad of the darkness in the passage outside. Unlike the traditional young lover, however, he was not destined to spend the dark hours in waking dreams of his love. Nay, the pretty child did him better service. That night, for the first time in ninety-six weary hours, he slept, soundly and dreamlessly, till Alexei came to call him, when he rose with a feeling of great strangeness, of irrevocable change, upon him, as he faced a final joyless day.

There was no help for it. He must return, that afternoon, to the Corps; where now there would be no weekly breaks in his monotony of unhappiness. So much he learned in a brief, uncomfortable interview with his father, immediately after breakfast. And when he was dismissed, he understood that it was Prince Michael's farewell to him for an indefinite period: a fact which troubled him very little in itself, however; the less so since, when he reached his room again, he found in his hand **an** envelope containing a princely sum of pocket-money—which was to last him through the spring.

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Wearily and drearily, however, the boy, with the aid of his serf, packed the few garments he had brought with him, and then went off to hang about the closed door of his aunt's suite of rooms, in which, also packing, was Nathalie: that strange, new Nathalie, born for him fifteen hours before.

He had reached a great depth of unhappiness when suddenly, about noon-time, the gate to fairy-land opened and he was admitted by Celestine, who had been sent, indeed, to seek him. In a few, whirling moments, he found himself eating an early *déjeuner à la fourchette* with his aunt and cousin, after which he drove with them to the Petersburg station, and there, upon the noisy, crowded platform, reached his empyrean.

Madame Dravikine and her maid were in the carriage reserved for them, arranging their bags and rugs. But Nathalie had remained—ah, was it not of her own choice?—outside, for three minutes longer. Their few words were as simple and as awkward as inexperience could make them; but they were afterwards gone over, a hundred times, at least, by Ivan, who, at each repetition, became more impressed by the brilliance, the wit, the *savoir-faire*, the repose of Mademoiselle Nathalie's brief and stumbling formalities. Then—then Madame Dravikine was calling her daughter. A whistle blew. The second bell rang loudly. Officials jangled hastily down the platform; and Ivan, his heart throbbing in his throat, suddenly caught his cousin's slender figure in his arms, held her for one endless instant, found her lips with his own, and found himself, five minutes later, gazing blindly down an empty track, while the footman at his side stared at him in stupid wonderment. So, coloring with shame, joyously angry, broken by the long prospect of ensuing grief and longing—not for one being loved and lost, but for two—he entered the carriage which was to carry him across Moscow, from

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heaven to hell: from the Petersburg station to the stone buildings of the *Corps des Cadets*, where, in the ensuing weeks, Ivan Gregoriev, already an adept in enduring the various forms of school-boy misery, was about to begin upon a lesson before which more than one grown man would have visibly shrunk; and under which Ivan himself, before it was finished, had become appalled at his own capacity for suffering.

During every age of humanity, in every state and stage of human civilization, there have been certain great-souled beings who, for the sake of a totally inadequate reward, have delivered themselves over, bound and helpless, into the hands of a task-master severe, relentless, all-demanding, but wise and just beyond every other teacher of mankind. The greater number of these daring persons have, in the end, accomplished their schooling, done their tasks, and reached their goal; because, once in the toils, they must needs go forward, or die. A very few of these toilers, Hindoos ascending towards Arahathship, Christians aspiring to certain heaven by way of certain martyrdom, have been given beforehand an exact estimate of the price they were to pay. But all others, the vast majority of those demanding of nature her divinest gifts, have mortgaged themselves blindly for an amount, and at a rate of interest, unknown, undreamed of. Of these, Ivan was one. At the age of sixteen he first felt his power, made his demand. Consciously or unconsciously—probably both—he cried to Fate: “Behold me! I hold a message for mankind! The Spirit of Music will deign to make use of me as her instrument. I am summoned to the world-service. Give me, then, that which shall make me great enough to bring this gift of mine to its highest issue, that my mistress may find her priest worthy of acclaim and of advancement!”

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This is a cry that Fate is bound to answer, for it is the cry of assurance. Hearing his words, the Great One stood before the boy and considered him thoughtfully. It may be that he was given secret warning of the meaning of his demand. This it is not for us to know. But, knowing or unknowing, he repeated his cry, and was answered. There and then, with this mysterious, perverse wisdom, his task-master began his training, blinding the eyes of the pupil to all save the few immediate steps along the steep road that lay before, permitting him to advance only step by step, under her guidance. Ivan yielded himself as clay to those powerful hands; but the clay was pure, and, because of its youth, more pliable than are those who know themselves only in later years. And now, had he wished it, his master would not have let him go.

Poor Ivan! My poor hero! How was he lashed through that long spring, and the summer that he spent alone at ghost-haunted Klin, where every corner of house and garden spoke to him of his mother. How pitilessly was he dragged through depths of grief and solitude and hopeless longing; till he stumbled, half fainting, deep in the slough of despair! Hopeless and heart-sick, forgetting, and, he believed, forgotten by, every living joy, he fought his battle of temperament hand to hand, imagining every contest lost. Nothing of his past, his present or his future, was clear before him. He was as one crying in the wilderness; and no echo of an answer caught his ear. So numb was he from emotional experience by the summer's end, that, in the second week of September, he returned to Moscow for his second winter in the Corps, with hardly more than a dull and throbbing sense of dread.

The cold weather set in early that year. October and November passed in a whirl of powdery snow and winds that cut through the heaviest furs. As the time of

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Christmas fasts and feasts drew on, Ivan began to long for what he believed would not be granted him—the spending of his holiday week in comparative freedom at home. He was, however, too proud to beg such permission; and not one word from Prince Michael did he receive. It was, then, not till the very hour that his companions were gayly rushing off to their various conveyances of departure, that Ivan, standing ruefully in the snow-filled court-yard, perceived Piotr tramping through the outer gate, looking about him, undecided as to the right entrance.

That night Ivan slept beneath his father's roof for the first time in nine months; and in the gray of early morning there came to him an idea of radiant promise. The pocket-money sent him in September—five hundred rubles, the existence of which his companions had fortunately never surmised, remained almost untouched. Ivan was extravagant only in the purchase of music-paper and harmony-books, which are not matters of great cost. Why, then, should he not drive to-day to the Tverskaia, and there select Christmas presents for those few to whom it would be a delight to give? The custom, not at that day so prevalent in Russia as now, was still by no means unusual. And though Piotr and Alexei and old Másha, besides, as a matter of duty, his father, were the names on Ivan's written list, they were all of them meaningless compared with that one gift for her for whom no gift in the world could be sufficiently fine or costly.

Through that whole morning he dragged the sleigh and patient Alexei up and down the Tverskaia, while, the other presents long since selected, he went from shop to shop, dismayed anew at every place by the price asked for those gems which alone seemed fitting for the object of his gift. Still, in the end, he was comparatively satisfied; nor was his choice one likely to displease any

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feminine soul the world over. For the little, pearl-studded bracelet that lay in a blue-velvet case in the breast-pocket of Ivan's coat was, considering the boy's inexperience, in astonishingly appropriate taste; and well calculated to recall him to the mind of the girl of whom he had dreamed through nine long months.

The remainder of the day belonged to the gods; for Ivan managed to devote more than two hours in the penning of a moderately long, rather stiff little letter addressed to his cousin Nathalie, at the Catherine Institute for the Daughters of Nobility, in Petersburg. Moreover, this done, there was still the bracelet to be wrapped, tied and stamped. Then, after his return from the nearest official registry, there remained the dear delight of dusk-dreams, which, to-day, concerned the probable reception of his gift, the reading of his letter, and, climax of climaxes, the probability of an acknowledgment!

Ivan's holiday week passed slowly, and there came no word from Petersburg. On each of the last three mornings he rose tremulous with hope; on each of the nights retired praying for a speedy morrow. But instead of any joy, these days brought him only unexpected trials. His father, it seemed, had suddenly become much interested in his son's straight, strong presence, and took opportunity to keep him, for long periods every day, in his company, discussing with him the details of his life at the Corps, and the possibilities of the future. Each conference brought only strengthened conviction of his father's insistence upon a military-diplomatic career for him, and of the futility of the slightest hope of leading that musician's life for which he had been created. To-day, the least suggestion of his secret desires might bring upon him a storm which would, then and there, forever annihilate them. At this day his own, spiritual guide had become a thing of little importance, in Ivan's

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mind, compared with the relentless strength which his father could exhibit at an instant's warning. And, because he had not yet learned that supreme faith in destiny to which he afterwards did attain, Ivan carried this curious trouble with him through many a long day, nor cast it wholly off till the world had changed for him.

On the day after New Year's Ivan returned drearily to the Corps, where, after a week of aimless dejection, that institute, following its invariable custom, brought him an unlooked-for blow. It was in the form of a small packet, bearing the Petersburg mark, which, on opening, he found to contain a little pearl-studded bracelet, and a note that ran as follows:

"MY DEAR IVAN MIKHAILOVITCH,—The mother-superior of the Catherine Institute has forwarded to me a gift and a note designed by you for your cousin Nathalie.

"I very much regret that you should have made such a mistake as to think that little girls either receive jewelry from any persons other than their parents, or, indeed, at my daughter's age, receive it at all. Nor do the pupils of the Institute accept communications from any persons but those whose names are upon a list prepared by the parents of the inmate.

"Wishing you the compliments of the season, and health under the blessing of your patron saint, accept, my dear nephew, the considerations of my sincere regard.

"CAROLINE IVANOVNA DRAVIKINE."

Ivan read this short missive till he had it by rote. At each repetition it struck him as more cutting, more cruel, more unjust. His aunt had certainly intended a rebuke; but she hardly realized either the over-sensitiveness of Ivan's nature or the extent of his boyish feeling for his cousin, whom he concluded to be responsible, by some unfathomable pique, for his humiliating discomfiture.

As a matter of actual fact, Nathalie had never received either letter or gift. She, like Ivan, had left her school during Christmas week to spend the festival with

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her father and mother. It was not till two days after the departure of Mademoiselle Dravikine from the institute that the packet and the letter from Moscow had been placed in the hands of the mother-superior. That worthy woman, examining the list of her pupil's correspondents, found upon it but one person from Moscow — Madame la Princesse Gregoriev, lately deceased, whose name she now took the opportunity of erasing from the authorized list. This done, it remained for her to ponder upon the subsequent conclusion of this very unusual incident. Undoubtedly something must be done, if not with the letter at least with the packet, which, even to her unworldly eyes, had about it a suggestion of gold and gems that could not but bring a flutter of interest to a heart which, long as it had been consecrated to unworldly things, was still of the eternal feminine. It was not till the good, stupid soul had resorted to earnest prayer, that she hit upon the inspiration of casting all responsibility upon the capable shoulders of her pupil's mamma, the worshipful Countess Dravikine.

This august lady, though it did not occur to her to seek council with the Most High, found adequate means of disposing of the undesirable gift. It was a matter of considerable satisfaction to her that Nathalie had not been made cognizant of the little affair. Yet the watchful mother would have been not a little amazed could she have read the depths of her demure daughter's mind, and found there a vague but unquestionable disappointment at having in so many months received neither word nor message from her Moscow cousin. It was odd that Madame Dravikine should not have realized, by this time, that her daughter was the child of her own heart: and, since her childhood, Caroline Ivanovna had certainly never failed to recognize the least of her own conquests. Was it possible that the woman

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now high in the favor of a second reign, should have a dunce for a daughter? Yet the mother would probably have felt something other than satisfaction had she suspected how keenly Mademoiselle Nathalie had studied her tact and her tactics. It might be flattery of the sincerest order; but it must, nevertheless, prove rather too trying for comfort.

It had been in the August of the year 1843 that the court journal of Petersburg announced, at the head of its budget from Tsarskoë-Selo, at which fashionable resort the Dravikines were wont to spend part of each summer, the birth of a daughter to the popular and fascinating Countess, Caroline Ivanovna. Within the month there began to pour in upon that lady a flood of congratulations which, upon the occasions of the first calls, were astutely turned to tactful condolences, it being at length understood that, while the Count was satisfied with the sex of his child, the Countess daily vibrated between rage and tears that she should not have given her house an heir. And since it was unquestionably madame who ruled the family, young Mademoiselle Nathalie, despite her remarkable eyes, her curling black hair and her rose-leaf skin, came to spend her babyhood in the care of the Dravikine serfs; until at the age of six she talked like a kitchen-maid, and had the manners of a stable-boy—or a Grand-Duke.

Now, in the autumn of 1849, Count Dravikine, whose promotions came about as regularly as his wife's allowance was paid, had just been created Assistant Minister of Public Works; and the dignity thereby superinduced in him was in exact proportion to the height of his upward step. Upon a November afternoon, then, as his Excellency was returning from the Council, he came suddenly upon his daughter, standing in the court-yard of his house, bare-headed, arms akimbo, feet spread apart in the attitude of a jockey, her white bonnet

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thrown upon the muddy flags before her, her shrill voice raised to a scream, as she pelted her helpless nurse with a string of oaths that would have done credit to his Iron Majesty, all for presuming to interrupt her game within doors in order to take her for the prescribed daily walk in the gardens of the Tauride.

Count Dravikine, his eyes narrowing with anger, approached the furious child, lifted her, now kicking frantically, in two powerful arms, carried her straight to his wife's boudoir, and flung her before her mother. Then, in a voice that Caroline had heard only twice before, he expressed his opinion of the up-bringing of his child, finishing with certain forceful suggestions of change for the future.

Countess Caroline listened without a word; but when her husband left her, he was well aware that his orders would be obeyed to the letter. The Countess, indeed, respected her partner and had continued to obey his rare commands simply because she was aware of the existence of that very voice and manner. And from that hour the education of her tomboy became with her a matter of considerably greater moment than the planning of the winter's campaign, or the choice of a costume for the first court ball of the season.

It followed that Mademoiselle Nathalie passed through two extremely trying years. At the end of them, however, she was a child transformed. No one now could possibly mistake her for a boy. She could read and write, spell fairly, had some knowledge of arithmetic and the conjugation of *Amo*: and, finally, her knowledge of intricate profanity had materially lessened. Nowadays, when she was left alone in her rage, her most forceful expressions seemed to be "*Dieu de Dieu de Dieu!*" or "*Sap-r-r-risti!*" of her mild little tutor or her more vigorous French maid.

In spite of this conventional training, Nathalie, whose

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temperament contained a strong dash of masculinity, was quite eleven years old before she began to turn her vivid imagination to dreams of distant débutantism or still remoter officers, who, in the most brilliant of uniforms, should appear at miraculous moments in her career, bringing shame and jealousy to armies of ill-mannered rivals. After the first three months in the Catherine Institute, this style of amusement also changed, and she was overcome by a religious mania which, being encouraged on every hand, might possibly have become really dangerous. It was by finally emerging from it unscathed, and having, at the age of thirteen years and six months, resolved herself into an agreeably normal young person whose quiet manners covered a swift and keenly feminine brain, that Nathalie Dravikine proved herself worthy of her mother's steel.

This, indeed, Countess Caroline came herself to perceive. After their long winter's separation, during those few days together in the sorrowing house of Gregoriev, during the April of 1857, mother and daughter came closer together than ever before. Madame Dravikine was softened by grief; and the consolation she found in her daughter's presence was as great as it was unexpected. Nathalie's tenderness and gentleness were certainly traits of the Dravikines, rather than of the Blashkov family. But Caroline, absorbed in memories of her beloved sister, failed either to analyze these, or to pay much heed to the two or three brief scenes between her girl and Ivan, which should have been summarily checked in their infancy. As it was, Mademoiselle Nathalie gained some relief from gloom and loneliness in the open admiration of her cousin; and, after the first day of novelty, found herself taking a quivering delight in this, her first affair.

The little climax of it all, that five minutes on the platform of the Petersburg station, which ended in a

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most uncousinly kiss, flamed scarcely less hot in the memory of the maiden than in that of Ivan. Nathalie carried back with her into the gray Petersburg Institute such a host of flagrant dreams as kept a dozen chums about her through the long twilights of as many afternoons. For the damsel was an erratic priestess of Eros; and, at this dream-age, she and her comrades gave to the technique of forthcoming flirtation a patient analysis that promised adequate devastation among the courtier army awaiting their acknowledged young-ladyhood.

Thus comes it that we take a final glance through two childish prison - houses, in far - separate Russian cities, wherein a youth and a maiden lie nightly dreaming the same dreams: one of them a spirit already bonded to the service of mind under the whip of circumstance: destined to storm rocky heights, from which hard-won eminences he shall command great views of sweeping plains and far-off mountain ranges; the other a pretty chrysalis on the eve of her change into a butterfly of butterflies; who is, nevertheless, to attempt flights overhigh and overfar for her frail wings; venturing to unfriendly lands whence she must return with frayed and tired pinions and a bruised and bleeding little soul. And their two destinies, so divergent, are yet fated, ever and again, in the swift swinging round their orbits, to approach, touch, and bound away again in opposite directions, strive though they may to maintain for a while some parallel course.

Kinder, most surely, just to leave them there: well-guarded children, walled securely away from the black, bleak world; oblivious of all things save the white innocence of their dreams of first, most fragile, high-romantic love.

CHAPTER VII

SPRING AND THE ROSE

THE summer of 1860 found Ivan Gregoriev at the end of an experience so long, so difficult, so seemingly unendurable, that, up to the last few months of its continuance, he had never indulged in any anticipations of its conclusion. Like all things, however, his four years' battle came finally to an end. One, two, three, four: despair, unhappiness, resignation, and, lastly, some sort of authority as the recognized leader in his work, at least, of the grandiloquent first form: so passed the years of his cadetship, till, in the June of 1860, he graduated, honorably, and went off to spend the summer at Klin in his own fashion, giving very little thought to that impending commission which was once again to reorder his existence. Many were the pleasures possible to him now in that quiet spot. Some part of gilded Moscow—the very best of the clubs, would have opened to him had he displayed any passion for baccarat, or the kindred games indulged by the vast majority of his class. Cared he naught for these, there was yet another phase of mannish existence to which he might agreeably be introduced. But when aspiring sycophants, members of the great mass of impecunious people of "family," found that this eccentric son of Prince Michael failed to appreciate the charms of a single member of the opera ballet (now indulging in the delights of their summer vacation, and expending part of their savings of fifteen rubles a week upon champagne suppers or coaching-

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parties to the various fashionable suburbs), they left him disgustedly to his own devices: which consisted in pouring over the orchestro-harmonical works of Monsieur Berlioz; and evolving strange progressions upon his new Érard.

Meantime, behold Prince Michael, alone in his sanctum, diligently studying the hieroglyphics on his map—of which the last corner, under the heading of “Alexander II.,” was gradually filling—and otherwise working most zealously towards a new end. Nor was zeal unnecessary; for it took him four months to make a certain lofty nobleman see the unavoidable consequences of the translation and publication of a certain portion of that map. It was October before a peremptory telegram brought Ivan, with all his paraphernalia (consisting principally of much-worn musical scores and a considerable pile of crude manuscript-music), back to Konnaia Square. That night the young man slept once more in his boy’s room in the west wing; and nine o’clock next morning found him, for the first time in his life, in his father’s innermost cabinet, facing the powerful form and the difficult eyes of Prince Michael.

The interview was a long one, but contained little repetition, and made good use of every minute of its three hours. Ivan’s whole problematical future was laid before him, clearly and in detail, as it had been constructed, during years of consideration, in his father’s brain. It was the one plan of Michael Gregoriev’s life which was destined to prove an absolute waste of energy. Still, there were to be two years of it literally fulfilled; wherefore we touch upon its preliminaries. Moreover, as Prince Michael spoke plainly, so we; though Ivan expended little amazement on the revelation, and appreciated remarkably little of the powerful influence that had been already brought to bear on his unimportant behalf. Michael himself was keenly aware that, even

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in the face of his map, he dared attempt nothing more till he had accumulated at least another twenty-four months of—um—ah—inner official history. But, for the present, he was satisfied with his accomplishment. Ivan, as graduate of one of the Corps, had been entitled to an ensignship in a line regiment. Influence, however, obtained for him a first lieutenancy in the Mounted Grenadiers—the finest regiment of the imperial guard in Petersburg, and the Emperor's favorite; whose uniforms, moreover, were calculated to capture the faith and fancy of any damsel, not of blood royal, in the whole Empire. Last, and, from Michael's point of view, most important of all, such a position would give Ivan at once the *entré* into the best clubs, and, with them, the "smartest" society of Petersburg.

Using these facts as a preface, Prince Gregoriev proceeded to sketch out, to his silent auditor, the lines of an ideal (!) social-politico-military career, untrammelled, at last, by the traditional ostracism of his race. For his commission would do much for him; and Madame Dravikine was practically pledged to provide some sort of reputation for her nephew, being not, unaware that the celebrated map of her brother-in-law contained more than one item of interest centring about her own most sacred name and title.

Through the period of explanation Ivan sat motionless, eyes down, brows knit, apparently attentive to his father's words. At the end, when the Prince had handed him his commission and half a dozen introductory letters, he bowed to his father, but uttered not one word of thanks or of understanding:—he—Sophia's son, though he had just received the gift of such a career as three-fourths of the young men in the country would have gone on their knees to obtain! Michael was half disposed to be pleased at the fellow's insolence. But he did not have the fineness of intuition to dream that his

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son, watching him closely through half-shut lids, had felt his blood pounding so furiously through his pulses that he dared not permit his lips to open for the fraction of a second lest he should fling some expression of his deep disgust, his anger—nay, his *hatred*—into his father's face, follow it with his commission, crushed into a ball, and rush forth from that ghost-haunted house, never to re-enter it again. Instead of this theatrical performance, then, Ivan chose silence and inaction. And finally, with bursting brain, he escaped to his own room, where he found Piotr—ostensibly waiting with tea.

But, unfortunately for Piotr, the young master was as uncommunicative as the old; and the door to the inner sanctum had, throughout this interview, been shut and bolted. Thus mere speculation was all that found tongue in the serf's quarters that night.

For many hours that afternoon—in fact, till darkness fell—Ivan sat over the samovar, drank glass after glass of tea, rolled cigarette after cigarette, and found himself at last still staring at a blank horizon-line, upon which not one picture consented to appear. Yet, reason with himself as he would, he knew that the heart within him was surging with joy. He was going out into the great world of Petersburg, his own master at last. He was going into the world of light, of gayety, of wealth; of the army, the court, of—of Nathalie Dravikine! Ay, it was true! That little love—that first, foolish love—lived in him still, having survived all the changes of his past changing years. Was it then to die, now, when his passion was about to be fired afresh by the presence of its living object?

Pondering thus, Ivan inhaled his cigarette-smoke, and felt the fine thrills of a subtle intoxication creeping along his nerves till, at length, his thoughts took a new turn. Standing, as he did, upon a threshold, looking through an open doorway out upon active life, he considered

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those things which he should force from the world for himself; and first of these, in his desire, was that knowledge which results only from experience. Kept all his life in the shadows of an unscalable wall of officialism, there had, nevertheless, reached his ears the first inarticulate rumors of that great movement of the youth of Russia towards enlightenment, towards education, towards individual understanding—a movement unique in the annals of the educational history of the world. From this period for many years all the youth of that tremendous Empire—every boy, every *girl*, from the highest to the lowest, was to rise up, alone, uninfluenced, demanding of age and guardianship the right to go forth into the world to work, to study—to learn, in fine, how a great country might in the future be developed. For a long time, even at Klin, within the walls of the Corps, Ivan had heard tales almost incredible in their strangeness of bitterness and rupture among the finest families between father and son, mother and daughter:—the members of the old régime against the self-constituted advocates of the new. Nor did a few months put an end to this incomprehensible movement. Sonya Kovalevsky, in the company of her chivalrously nominal young husband, had left her parental estate and was at work in Heidelberg, perfecting that mathematical genius that was to make her known throughout the scientific world. Following her brilliant example, went a small army of young, upright and earnest women and girls, by whom half the universities in Europe were presently invaded, by no means, as was soon learned, to the detriment of the collegiate standing, either in ethics or in learning. And as college after college opened its doors to these young seekers after truth, bigoted Russia stood aghast at the incalculable prospect of the future.

More knowledge of these facts, and information of and experience in half a hundred other matters, did Peters-

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burg promise its new lieutenant; and the more he thought of it all, the more eager did he become to embark at once upon this new existence. Nor was the time of his departure far away. He was just a month past his twentieth birthday when, upon a bitter October morning, he was admitted once more to his father's sanctum, this time to say good-bye. During the brief interview, Michael exhibited a touch of feeling, perceiving which Ivan felt a brief pang that he could not match it. But when a roll of twenty-five hundred rubles was placed in his hands as the allowance for his first six months, the young man's gratitude was sincere enough and deep enough to satisfy the father, who knew more than his son of the expenses entailed by a life in one of the crack regiments of the guard, and who informed Ivan a little sarcastically that his lieutenant's pay ought not to do more than keep him properly gloved and shod.

By the time he emerged from that celebrated closet, with his commission, his passport, and three letters of recommendation, together with his money, in his uniform pockets, Ivan found that his hand-luggage had already been carried out and placed in the sleigh that was to carry him on the first brief stage of his journey into the great world. And, as he left the palace and entered the square, his officer's swagger was just a trifle overdone. For he had shot up, as it were, in a night: he was twenty and a personage at last!

The journey northward across the snowy flats was all a delight to the traveller. Those odd little first trains that ran over the famous "ruler line" between the two Russian capitals, were still sources of wonder and delight to the peasants of the scattered villages now beginning to spring up along the railway; and each stopping-point found the train surrounded by a throng of fur-clad individuals, many of whom had travelled some versts to see the train: perhaps accompanying a friend who was to

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travel a short distance therein; perhaps to get a load of merchandise or freight destined for a distant town; or, perhaps, just for the sake of seeing the engine, the cars, and the crowd that would assemble about them. Many of these last were country priests, idle on week-days, desolate enough in their unique isolation, glad to seek any sort of distraction for its own sake, and even more eager than their peasant inferiors for the distinction of a single word of greeting or command from one of the lords of passage. Ivan was pleased to alight frequently; get a brief walk in the sharp air; address a word or two to some adoring native; and scatter a handful of kopecks among the occasional children of the station-masters. But these paltry happenings were all forgotten, and his heart full to bursting, when at last, on the evening of the second day, there gleamed, far ahead through the dusk, the red lights of St. Petersburg.

The first week of a young man's independence: his entrance into the exalted rank of high-born bachelorhood—can it ever again be brought up out of the past a distinct, coherent memory? Hardly. For Ivan and the capital spun together in the wildest of dances, during the first days of their meeting. Ivan's mind whirled in a chaos of regimental introductions and instruction, wearying hunts for suitable bachelor quarters, long afternoon hours filled with the pungent smell of tanbark and the careerings of a horse with whom he never came to be on terms of absolute equality; evenings spent in the glamour of strange restaurants, the discussion of French *entrées*, and the contemplation of much-dressed denizens of the high and the half worlds; and, finally, retirement in a room at the Hôtel Bellevue, where a young lieutenant with only two thousand rubles in his pocket was not a person of any special importance.

This haze of memory terminated, finally, and objects

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appeared in a clearer atmosphere, when young Gregoriev became half-owner of a charming apartment in the irreproachable *Bashkov Peréolouk*, ten minutes' walk from his barracks, in partnership with a fellow-officer, one Vladimir de Windt, destined to become his friend of friends. And shortly after this momentous step, Ivan took another, by presenting his card in the *Serghievskaja*, *numéro 843*, where his aunt, Madame Dravikine, vouchsafed him ten minutes of her much-besought time, it being the afternoon of one of her receptions. In her small, but admirably arranged drawing-rooms, were gathered the cream of a certain set of Petersburg society, now met for the first time this season, and making the rooms echo with their particular variety of scandalous, intensely personal news acquired during a long summer, and apparently having been held back for exploitation at this special hour. Unintelligible as it proved to Ivan's unsophisticated ears, he listened with awe to the sound of royal, and other lofty and sacred names bandied about with a familiarity that was the opposite of respect.

By some imperceptible means, Madame Dravikine saw to it that her nephew came in contact with those people who could be useful to him; and she was satisfied, if slightly surprised, to see the ease with which he talked. Ivan himself wondered that he felt so little embarrassment in entering into the mood of the hour, and, while he talked, drank a great many cups of tea, each of which contained a considerable quantity of rum. But all the time he kept an eye over his shoulder, in the hope of catching some glimpse of his cousin Nathalie. Time passed, and the young lady did not appear. Ivan longed but did not dare to inquire about her. So, at last, he walked back to his apartment, arm in arm with de Windt, who had been no less surprised than pleased at discovering him in the house of so established a leader

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as Madame Dravikine. De Windt, himself a celebrated dandy, began, as they left the Serghievskaja.

"You are an enigma—a deceiver, Ivan Mikhailovitch! Here it is a week since you arrived. You profess to know no one. But you managed immediately to join quarters with me; and now"—he stopped, turning from the wind to light his cigarette—"now, on the first afternoon you are left alone, you immediately appear at one of the best-known houses in the Admiralty quarter, where you seem as much at home as—I myself!"

Ivan echoed his companion's laugh. He had gauged the real depth of de Windt's conceit, and knew him to be, at bottom, both sincere and just in his estimates of men and things. "I ought to be at home there, at least," he observed, quietly. "Caroline Ivanovna—Madame Dravikine—is my aunt."

"St. Sergel!—And you let us dub you '*bonhomme nouveau*'!—*Grand Diable*, Ivan Mikhailovitch, had you had the choice of Petersburg, you could not have selected a better *lanceuse* than Countess Caroline! On my word, your saint favors you!"

And Ivan, who shrugged away the whole affair, found Monsieur de Windt perfectly right. Fortune had stationed herself at his shoulder, at last; and the young man did well docilely to obey her whispered directions. In a month, there were a thousand young men about town, far above the station of a Gregoriev, who would have given half their prospects for Ivan's present position. But the fickle goddess loves well to show her face to him who has never sought to lift her veil; and to Ivan, whom she had hitherto served so ill, she chose suddenly to shower with all the things that youth desires. The young man found that, many and varied as had been his dreams of the new life, reality surpassed them all. Work, consisting of regimental duties and musical study, had taken a large place in his mental picture of the present; and these

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things, with an occasional holiday spent in exploring the new city, or, better, alone in the company of his aunt, were to constitute all his work and recreation. Moreover, he had, perhaps, secretly pictured himself neglecting his prescribed duties for those musical studies which he had hoped at last to undertake seriously, at the recently founded Conservatoire: perhaps under its founder and chief instructor, the great Rubinstein; at least under the second professor, the worshipful Zarembo, whilom conductor of the opera.—These occupations, conceived during long, wakeful nights in the dormitory of the Corps, at Moscow, had seemed to him, at that time, details of a nearly perfect life. But Lieutenant Gregoriev of the imperial guard, man-about-town and nephew of Countess Dravikine, could afford to laugh at his childish ideas of a “manly” existence.

First of all, Ivan soon discovered that, in winter, regimental duties were practically nil. Half the privates of his regiment had been dismissed to their native villages. The rest, though nominally in barracks, and paraded once or twice a month (very badly), were wont to eke out their half-pay (supposed to be whole, but actually shared with two lofty administrators whose names were known to a certain astute Moscow official) by working in the Artels that ply their various crafts in the Russian cities throughout the winter season. The chief duty of the officers, then, was to act as escort to members of the royal family when they took formal outings, or made short journeys to Peterhof or such of the country palaces as were within driving distance of the Hermitage. Also, certain mornings of each week were spent at the riding-school; and others in the practice of fencing and shooting, or the perusal of the drill manual. The afternoons and evenings were free, in so far as a member of smart society can ever be free, considering the necessity of being seen in every private or public

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place of amusement considered "the thing" at the moment. And, though Ivan was far too much of a novice to perceive any iron underneath the flowers on the chains he had voluntarily donned, he soon discovered that regular study of any kind was impossible for him in that atmosphere.

Ivan's regiment had always been a popular one in the capital; and, at the end of the first six weeks of the new season, there was in it no officer more sought-after than young Prince Gregoriev—"a nephew of the Dravikines, you know." And this "young Prince"—who had himself never been known to use his title, lost no time in picking up the manners and the jargon of his small, new world. The thing that, in the beginning, amazed him most, however, was the attitude towards him of his aunt; whom he viewed with deep respect as the mother of Nathalie. He was slow to understand Madame Dravikine's habit of surrounding herself with young men; or the fact that she had had it assiduously whispered about that her sister, the mother of Ivan, had been married when she was herself a child scarce out of arms. But he wondered to find how very few of his aunt's intimates remembered the age of her daughter, now for many years convent-wrapped. His first moment of disillusion came on the day that his aunt informed him, with considerable asperity, that his pretty cousin was not a person to be mentioned in their circle—the reason given—that "she was not yet out,"—sounding rather flimsy even to his trusting ears. Still, he was given to understand that, in all probability, Nathalie would be presented next winter, at one of the court balls; on which day, Caroline admitted, wearily, to herself, her special reign must end. But to her, seasoned through fifteen years of unavoidable pretence, it was impossible to see the effect of her customary fiction of existence, upon a mind hitherto so

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unused to feminine subterfuge as that of Sophia's son.

Ivan, troubled at heart by these and several other details of society life, made certain cautious observations to de Windt which sent that sophisticated young man into tempests of mirth. But guileless Ivan, who had used no names, never realized that he himself was responsible, by his insensibility, for the failure of Madame Dravikine's latest attempted flirtation, which took the drawing-rooms of Petersburg by storm that December, and set men and women alike laughing cruelly over the fall of Countess Caroline's carefully constructed age, which was announced, *en haute voix*, by her nephew, at a ball. At the same time, it was also, in all probability, this same incident, that saved poor Nathalie another year of seclusion and prayers. For, had not the world already found her out, it is scarcely probable that the gay Countess, arrived at the actual hour of abdication, would have had the courage to bid her youth good-bye, and take up her place behind an exquisite débutante.

It was odd, perhaps, that Ivan was not at once banished from the sunshine of his aunt's favor. But, for some reason, she chose to retain him among her circle of devotees, sore as was his heart and disabused his mind, of all illusion concerning the woman whom he had hitherto looked up to as the single true companion, gay counsellor, gentle philosopher, of his unhappy mother; and whom he now saw, perhaps rather unjustly, as a *mère*, deceptive, heartless *mondaine*.

There were, however, in the society of the Russian capital into which Ivan had been so swiftly drawn, an infinite variety of other types who amused, pleased, occasionally interested, their new companion and observer. Petersburg was still under the stimulus of its changed rule. Nicholas, the Iron Czar, a man stern, unlovable and unsocial, was dead. With him had

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ended alike the horrors of a dreadful war and the lifeless formalities which, throughout his reign, had served as the only court functions. Just now a young Emperor, delight of his people and his court, husband, moreover, of the most charming of Princesses, was manifesting as much interest in evening gayeties as he did during the daytime in those gigantic, newly projected reforms to which his wife and his favorite minister were so ardently urging him. The six months' court mourning, now thrown back, had revealed a lining of glowing rose. St. Petersburg, from humblest serf to Czarevitch, was filled with life and joy. And the society of the capital had plunged into a fever of gayety unknown for twenty years. Amusements began at noon and ended the following dawn. The first entertainment of the day was the second breakfast:—for everybody naturally followed the French mode. Afterwards there was skating on the lakes of the Tauride; then the traditional drive down the Nevskiy Prospekt—a ceremony that shall endure till St. Petersburg is forgotten; then a round of calls at the houses of those old and noble families whose names demand that they open their doors daily to the younger of their class. Later, between eight and nine o'clock came dinner—a meal by no means neglected because of the tea, *zakouski* and sweets that had been consumed steadily since *déjeuner*. And at ten o'clock, dinner over and the theatre begun, Petersburg began to grow really wide awake and to enjoy itself. For of all nations in the world, the Russian is the latest. Your true Slav nobleman is always a night-owl. Languid at luncheon, he endures his drive, enjoys his dinner, enthuses at the opera, scintillates at supper, and is *then* roused to a full sense of the real business of life: dancing, gambling, or prolonged calls upon his friends; after which there is usually some sleighing-party to the ice-palace on the Neva, or, if

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nothing better offers, a round of the music-halls, which open only after the opera is closed. Yes, truly, after one month in this land, no one will deny that Paris has held too long the reputation that should belong to St. Petersburg: that of the gayest of all the gay cities of the world.

Thus, for some months—from October to January—Ivan lived, nor paused to reflect on the questionable usefulness of such a life. The boy had known too many wistful years to be easily inoculated by any reactive poison in his stimulant. All the quieter dreams of that secret, inner life of boyhood, were temporarily laid by. He failed to appreciate the real value of the life he had led; the gift that he had begun to develop in the finest, highest way. Had any one questioned him—though no one of his present world would have dreamed of so doing, he would doubtless have laughed at the suggestion of returning to the old ways. But whether such questions would or would not have set him, afterwards, to some furtive weighing of respective values, it is impossible to say. Still, one may be permitted to hope the best of one's hero; or how impress a languid public with his qualities?

Madame Dravikine, despite her little discomfiture, would nevertheless have declared the season from October to January perfect — save, possibly, for a single gap in the royal coterie, and that in a spot that she did not habitually frequent. As a matter of fact, it was only in January that there returned to the capital, after nearly a year's absence, possibly, the Empress excepted, the finest woman in Petersburg: sister of the Iron Czar, and aunt of the present Emperor—the Grand-Duchess Helena Pavlovna, voluntary leader of the reform party in the capital. This great lady, immediately upon her return, doffed her prolonged mourning and threw open once more the doors of her famous *salon*. And it was

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through her—sister of kings—that Ivan, flocking with the rest of his world to her famous drawing-rooms, returned after a little, back to his best self.

Her Royal Highness was a pattern of energy in all she undertook; and it had been the habit of her lifetime to receive three evenings a week. On Monday, on Wednesday, and on Friday she was at home: on each night to a different world. On Mondays, with Milutin throned on her right hand, she received the homage of the various members of the Council, each with his pet bundle of intrigues; and deftly encouraged the clamor of controversy sure to be roused among these ministers of varied persuasion. On Wednesdays she sat alone in the centre of her *salon*, laughing at and with the pretty world that came to flutter about her, in its richest plumage and most changeable humor. Finally, on Friday, she rewarded herself for duties done. Dressed quietly in black, with merely a scrap of old point on her high, white head, she gave her hands, her brains, and the refinement of her fine senses to—the musicians and the music of Russia. For music was her recreation and her passion; and she had created for it and for herself such a *salon* as is scarcely to be equalled in history. No caste save that of ability was known on these nights. Artists, uncouth and shy, who would have flown at the thought of a royal command, flocked hither, sure of a genial welcome, artistic appreciation, and absolute freedom from the dreaded fashionables of the unknown world. For the Emperor himself could hardly have got an invitation to his royal aunt's Fridays "at home."

It was Vladimir de Windt (who, upon further acquaintance, betrayed many hidden and unexpected talents,) who carried Ivan, experimentally, to one of these Fridays. For de Windt, who had in him, deeply hidden, tenderly cherished, that germ of artistic comprehension that is not to be acquired by any means, di-

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vined the same thing in his new-found companion, and took a great risk to prove his surmise true. Ivan had not an inkling of what Vladimir ventured in taking him to that exclusive little palace, where, did his protégé prove a boor, he knew well he should never find a place for himself again. But Vladimir had spent many an evening at the opera with Ivan; and had studied well the expressions that Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti, even Flotow, at his best, could bring out upon his companion's mobile face. And her Royal Highness was well known to reward the discoverer of any new man of talent in her special art.

On that mid-January evening of Ivan's first appearance at the palace on the quays, the scene that greeted his eyes was the same that afterwards became so familiar to and so beloved by him. In the centre of the square, well-lighted, bare *salon*, which, used only for these evenings, contained not one of the customary hangings, or any medley of useless toys and ornaments, stood a great Érard, its shining top raised, flanked by two long stands heaped with music of every description. At the right of the instrument, willingly accepting second place, stood the arm-chair of the Grand-Duchess; and about her, in an informal circle, each one quite at ease, sat or stood twenty or thirty men, young and old, with possibly half a dozen women. At the piano, engaged in marking a sheet of manuscript music, was a short, heavy-set person, with a leonine mane and deep, brilliant eyes: a man known all over Europe, and to be known throughout America: one Anton Rubinstein, pianist, a maker of music. At his elbow, but talking to a frail-looking woman, was his brother, Nicholas, destined always to be overshadowed by Anton, but to whom the cause of Russian music was to owe far more, in the end, than to the more showy *virtuoso*. In the knot about Madame Helena's chair were Zarembo, Sérov, Glinka, Balakirev,

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Stassov, Lechetizsky—for the moment a special protégé of the Grand-Duchess, and even young Rimsky-Korsakov, at this time merely a Conservatoire pupil. Finally, far away, at the end of the room, stood a long table, whereon were two unlighted samovars, flanked by golden platters of sandwiches, cakes and caviare, together with piles of untouched plates.

At the entrance of the two young men, de Windt grasping Ivan by the arm, the Grand-Duchess turned, in time to hear their names announced. And after a moment, she summoned them to her, with a slight gesture. Then, breaking off her argument with Ivan's future biographer, she held out a hand for de Windt to salute.

"Vladimir Vassilyitch, I expected you.—Have you enrolled yourself under Zarembo yet, for proper instruction?"

De Windt laughed. "Your Highness should get his Majesty and my Colonel to claim less time of me!"

"Bah, Monsieur Impertinence! The yacht club's green tables see more of you than your Colonel, as we all know.—Whom have you brought me?"

"My brother officer and good friend, Lieutenant Ivan Mikhailovitch Gregoriev, lately of Moscow."

Her Highness started and straightened. "Gregoriev!—The son of Gregoriev of Moscow, here!—Are you aware, sir—" Suddenly she stopped, her gaze meeting that of Ivan, and noting the deathly pallor of his face, the sudden fire in his eyes. With an effort, she restrained herself, and presently observed, in a different tone:

"I have heard of your father, Lieutenant.—Are you a musician?"

A shred of color crept back into Ivan's lips; but his voice was unsteady as he said, in a low, rather rough voice: "I ask the pardon of your Royal Highness, and beg leave to go.—The fault and the mistake of my presence are entirely mine!"

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At these words, de Windt turned towards him, sharply; but their hostess interrupted his first syllable:

"You have made no mistake, sir. Vladimir Vasilyitch is responsible for all that he does. You are, I presume, a lover of music?"

"Indeed yes, your Highness!"

"You play?"

Ivan, glancing towards the piano, encountered the keen look of the world's master-pianist. "I have played at home, as a boy, for—my mother," he answered, the last word uttered very low.

A brief silence followed his speech. The little scene was unusual, and had by this time caught the attention of the room. Ivan felt the hostile fire of many eyes fixed on him, and perceived dimly what they had resolved:—that he was to be tried, here, as others had been before him—rather cruelly.

Finally the Duchess herself glanced towards the piano. "Anton, have you marked your expression?"

"That is finished.—But I have not as yet suggested a fingering for the cadenza."

"No matter.—Ivan Gregoriev, Monsieur Rubinstein has brought us a new manuscript—a barcarolle, you said, Anton?—finished to-day, and brought here to be played to me. He writes a clear hand. Sit down, then, and let us hear you interpret it."

"I, madame!"

"I said so."

Ivan flushed crimson, and then went white again. An instant later he smiled: smiled as on the night of his initiation at the *Corps des Cadets*, when his tormentors could not make him cry out. Without another word he walked to the piano and seated himself in the place vacated by Rubinstein, who, angered at the thought of having his new creation murdered by a tyro, speedily betrayed his mood to the company, who regrouped them-

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selves near the instrument. After this, the silence became absolute.

A long, tense moment, and then,—a sound broke the stillness: a long and delicate *tremolo*, high in the treble. Instinctively, Helena Pavlovna closed her eyes. The vibration increased, descended an octave, continued an instant alone, and then was joined by a second tone by which the melody was begun. It was a passage simple to read and played simply, but with both delicacy and understanding, and without any of that *rubato* or other affectation by which young Lechetizky was already beginning to mar his style. It was music pure, almost classical—the work not of a *virtuoso*, but of a composer. And Rubinstein, leaning against the wall, his eyes on Ivan's face, felt his humor change. His work, if better than he had hitherto believed it, was certainly not being spoiled as yet. Still—he must wait till the turning of the page, where began some of those elaborate pyrotechnics that cheapen so much of his work. Could this modest youth accomplish anything intricate? Probably not. And yet—the fellow was calm enough. Even Rubinstein failed to divine the extent of the strain under which he labored.

Ivan had begun the *barcarolle* trembling. The first page successfully accomplished, however, he lost himself a little, and began to feel the old, musical, sixth sense creeping through him, and emerging, gloriously, at his fingertips. Confidence increased. He had turned the page. Ah! Here, truly, was need of it. The ensuing passage was utterly beyond his rusty skill! One hurried glance told him that. Afterwards—he went calmly on. Rubinstein, listening more at ease, was seen to give a sudden start, stare an instant at the performer, and then, catching Nicholas' eye, lift his brows in protest, to the only man who had heard the composition before. Ivan was retaining the melody, picking it unerringly from

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the mass of blurring notes, and substituting for the difficulties of the accompaniment, a simple, graceful set of broken chords.

At the beginning of the second part of the development the performer, exalted, even a little intoxicated with his sense of success, essayed a bit of improvisation considerably more important than the first. This time he ceased absolutely to follow Rubinstein's harmony, and, retaining simply the melody, changed, however, to a minor key, he produced an odd, rhythmical little series of syncopations so rich, so strange, and withal so unlawful that when, omitting the conventional *cadenza*, he plunged into a coda of his own, Rubinstein flew furiously to the piano and would have struck the youth's hands from the keys but for a gesture from her Highness so imperious and so unmistakable that the great pianist's angry protests died upon his lips, and he joined, perforce, in the tumult of applause that ended the unparalleled performance.

Ivan found himself the centre of an intensely curious throng. Congratulation, commendation of a two-edged sort, questions and ejaculations, flew round him like hail. Then there fell a sudden silence as the Princess, leaning heavily on her cane, approached the piano through a little lane respectfully opened for her in the throng. But it was to Rubinstein, not Ivan, that she addressed herself:

"What has this young man been about, Anton?—Your style is certainly very much improved!"

"Your Highness, it was not my barcarolle you heard, but a clever bit of improvisation on my theme—my own development having proved, no doubt, too much for Monsieur Gregoriev's technique."

Helena Pavlovna cast one answering look at this man whose musical talent was surpassed only by his well-known, frantic jealousy of every possible rival. And

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then, taking the abashed Ivan by the hand, she turned and faced her guests:

“My friends, we have listened, to-night, to the début of one of Russia’s talented sons. I introduce to you, in Monsieur Ivan Mikhailovitch Gregoriev, a new composer; one who, a Russian of Russians, shall, I predict, carry the songs of our country beyond herself, and proclaim them over civilized Europe!”

A smile of self-forgetfulness, of an enthusiasm that betrayed the beauty of her royal soul, shone upon the lips and from the eyes of this true Princess, as Ivan, his heart beating to suffocation, fell impetuously upon one knee before her and raised her frail hand to his lips.

It was indeed his début in the Russian world of music; and alas! it gained for him fewer friends than enemies. For, of all types of men and women upon earth, those into whom Euterpe has breathed her spirit, are certainly the most practised in envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness.

CHAPTER VIII

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It cannot be denied that, on that momentous evening, the marked interest of the Grand-Duchess in Ivan and his general success, were out of all proportion to a performance which, as a matter of fact, any one in the room could probably have duplicated. True, Princess Helena's unerring judgment had at once marked the originality, the distinctiveness, of the young man's improvisation; though she did not fail also to mark his numberless transgressions of the rigid laws of harmony. And Ivan himself, when all was over, began to feel some little mortification that he had so openly betrayed his pleasure in his accomplishment; and he presently discovered that de Windt himself could teach him points in progression and modification of which he knew nothing: whereupon, behold him once again on fire to get to work at his long-delayed, vaguely-foreshadowed profession.

His rendering of the now celebrated *barcarolle*, had given him an unquestioned place in the *salon* of the Grand-Duchess, which henceforth he frequented regularly. And there he met with both adulation and opposition. To his secret surprise, Rubinstein, together with his coadjutor Zarembo, professed great enthusiasm concerning him, and unceasingly urged him to enter the Conservatoire. This, at length, he, in the company of de Windt, tentatively did: taking his place in one of Zarembo's classes of composition, and undertaking the study of orchestration under Serov. Here Ivan showed

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himself phenomenally prolific in the production of exercises; and he grasped the difficult principles of composition in a remarkably short space of time. Unfortunately, however, formal work did not content him; and one day he carried to Rubinstein two or three eccentric little pieces, on which he had expended both energy and admiration. Here, at last, the great Anton found his opportunity. He whipped Ivan's work to rags with sarcastic criticism; leaving not one measure untouched by his caustic and rather brutal wit. Next day he received his young pupil's resignation from his classes; and the gay world regained its pet. For Ivan, in a fit of childish anger, left his work behind him, and plunged into a furious round of dissipations, of which gambling now formed the chief. Dawn after dawn saw him leaving the green tables of either the "Nobility" or the Yacht clubs; and, as if to applaud his defection, fate decreed that Ivan could not lose. Baccarat, roulette, piquet, even whist,—Ivan won at them all, till one drawer in his escritoire was stuffed full of lightly won notes.

The Countess Dravikine, it seemed, was highly pleased at her nephew's return to what she considered the only proper society for a member of her family. And it was probably through some communication of hers that, during the second week in April, Ivan was astonished at the receipt of a very good-humored letter from his father, containing much specious advice upon his conduct, together with the intelligence that, henceforth, his allowance should be doubled. At this time of his life, indeed, Ivan might have thrown money into the street by handfuls and still have felt no want. But, as if to add mockery to the situation, this Ivan was the least extravagant of young men. His wants were singularly few; and the chief items in his expenditure consisted in the lending of money to his brother officers; all of whom eventually paid their debts.

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There was one thing, one brief but delightful incident, indirectly brought about by Madame Dravikine, which Ivan had to cherish during the long months that ensued.

During the whole of this winter of her cousin's introduction to the great world, Mademoiselle Nathalie Alexeiovna had remained shut away from any possible encounter, in the Catherine Institute. As the spring advanced, however, Mademoiselle Nathalie's mother began to receive rather disturbing reports concerning the health of the young girl. She was neither eating nor sleeping; she looked pale and worn; and she lay on her bed during all the hours of recreation. So Madame la Comtesse finally sacrificed a charming luncheon and a musical, and went, one afternoon, to see her daughter for herself. The sight did not prove reassuring. Nathalie was certainly not well. And the outcome was that, upon the advice of a doctor, the young lady obtained one month's leave from her studies and returned home to amuse herself, agreeably, under the wing of her mother, in the house in the Serghievskaja.

In spite of these things, the details of home life proved less diverting than the young lady had hoped. To her, accustomed for so many years to a regular routine of life and the continual companionship of girls of her own age, the fashionable mode of existence in her father's house was confusing and unpleasant. Her slight illness did not confine her to her room. On the contrary, the doctors had prescribed much open-air exercise, together with early hours. These things not being in the least in her mother's line of occupations, Mademoiselle Nathalie was driven to her own resources, and to arrange some sort of programme for herself. Among the many serfs of the household there was one, Ekaterina Nicolaievna, who had been her nurse in infancy, and, since the departure of her demoiselle to the Institute, had become a kind of *chargé d'affaires* of the serfs' house. Thus the old

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woman was accustomed, quite on her own responsibility, to leave the house every morning, some hours before her ladyship was awake, and betake herself to the various markets to buy food for the serfs' quarters, stopping, on the way home, to say her prayers before Our Lady of Kazan, and regaining the Serghievskaja before the Countess had rung for the first time. These excursions, of which, as a matter of fact, her mother was ignorant, Nathalie now joined, and they soon became a delight to the young girl, who was still child enough to enjoy early morning rising. It was to her an excitement to find herself abroad in the quiet streets, to study the men and women hurrying to their work, to watch the quaint sights of the hour, listen to the hoarse cries of the innumerable basket-vendors, and stand by, half terrified, half ashamed, while old Ekaterina bargained and haggled and quarrelled over her regular purchases of fish, *casha*, buckwheat flour and *kvass*, which was never made in the Dravikine household, but bought by each servant for himself out of the inevitable "tea-money."

On a certain morning in April, a few days before Easter, all the street merchants were abroad unusually early, and in great numbers. Two days before there had been a thaw; but now the streets were a sheet of glittering ice, and walking was a precarious business. Nathalie and her companion, their day's buying over, had just finished their devotions: which the girl went through with a reverence quite as deep as that of the old woman. Emerging upon the Nevskiy Prospekt, they had gone but a few steps from the famous little chapel, when Nathalie felt a light touch upon her arm, and lifted her eyes to behold a slender figure, wrapped in a fur-lined military coat, bending before her. As his head was raised, the young girl gave a little cry, upon which her guardian seized her arm protectingly, glaring, the while, at the presumptuous one:

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"Let me go, Katrina! It is my cousin—from Moscow—Ivan Mikhailovitch!—I knew that you were in Petersburg, Ivan. But—you are out very early!"

Ivan gave a joyous laugh. He was, as a matter of fact, just returning from a night of festivity at the Nobility Club. But this, naturally, was not to be confessed.

"No earlier than you, at least, mademoiselle," he returned. "And will you accept my escort to wherever you are going?"

Nathalie gave one, quick glance into the old woman's scowling face. Then the demon of mischief entered into her, and she accepted Ivan's offer.

That fifteen-minute walk to the Serghievskaja, with the lynx-eyed guardian tramping at his heels, wrought new havoc with Ivan. It took sixty seconds to perceive that the closely cherished ideal of his boyhood had been worthy of every moment of adulation expended on it. Two minutes more, and the intensity of past emotions was quite swallowed up in the joy of the present. In just what light the maiden regarded him, she made it difficult enough for him to guess. But the interpretation of his own feelings,—this furious throbbing of his heart, the awkward hesitancy of his speech,—was no very difficult matter. When at last he left her, at her mother's door, he made himself an inward promise that this should be the first of many such meetings. And when he reached his own quarters, it was to amaze de Windt by the radiance of his expression and his apparent lack of fatigue. Though he retired presently to his room and lay down there, he found sleep to be a thing entirely undesirable, considering the subject of his waking dreams.

Next morning, somewhat earlier than on the previous day, he entered the church of the Virgin of Kazan. But though for an hour and a half he saw every soul that

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entered there, his cousin did not come. That morning was a black one. In the afternoon, driven by his folly, he presented himself, at an absurd hour, at the house of his aunt. There he was received, promptly. But he was not long left in doubt about the nature of his welcome. Madame Dravikine, it appeared, had learned the whole tale of yesterday's walk from the dragoness-serf; and her nephew had to endure a short and sarcastic sermon upon the nature of etiquette for young girls which finally sent him from the house, white-faced and furious. Truly, if his aunt had vented upon him her preposterous species of jealousy, she had gained thereby no good-will from the young man, who worshipped her daughter from afar as a creature scarcely to be treated as a mortal being.

Blindly persistent, Ivan refused to be discouraged by his misadventure. For a month, at every hour of the day, he watched the door of the Dravikine residence; but failed, by any strategy, to catch a single glimpse of his pretty cousin. Nay—one exception there was! Upon a reception-day he did find her in her mother's drawing-room, seated before a samovar, prepared to answer "*oui*" or "*non*" to any remark addressed to her. But Ivan had kept his place beside her for less than ten minutes when he was superseded by a deprecating envoy from the Countess. Fifteen minutes later he left the house and went raging home, to endure, for the first time, serious pangs of jealousy. And, as he sat listening to de Windt's calm prophecies of Nathalie's success, next winter, as a *débutante*, he cursed volubly, under his breath, to think how soon every wretched *roué* in the city would be free to pollute the spotless child with glances, with words, even, in dances, with a clasp of her waist! De Windt, watching him covertly, said to himself that by that time, should this madness continue, Ivan would be fit only for an asylum.

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Meantime, the season advanced. The great thaw came; and there would be no more snow for months. Russia was a sea of mud. All young things were harkening to the call of the spring: and youthful blood, like sap, flowed fast. Ivan, vindictively acknowledging that, for the present, his ideal was quite beyond him, became, to a certain extent, interested in another woman, whose future career was destined, indeed, to touch his at points many and strange.

This young person was called Irina Petrovna; and she was a recent graduate of the Government School of Singing. Her father was one of the violins in the opera orchestra. And it was a great day for him when his daughter made her *début* on the boards over his head. She made her first appearance in a small rôle of a Mozart opera; achieving precisely the success predicted for her by her ironic master: a success of form, of face, above all, of manner. She had but a moderate voice, this remarkable young person. But she suffered no stage-fright; and though the ladies of the audience regarded her with no enthusiasm, it was to be observed that the vast majority of the men in the house, gave her brisk applause: hailing with delight this legitimate member of the troupe whom it would certainly be worth while to ask out to supper.

Ivan, rarely enough attracted by women of her type, was in a dangerously susceptible mood. And de Windt was hardly more displeased than surprised at the invariable attendance of Ivan on those evenings when Mademoiselle Petrovna was billed to appear. Ivan himself made no great effort to analyze the appeal she made to him: an appeal to the baser side of his nature. But, though he met the young woman more than once, it soon became evident, even to his friend, that he had no intention of attaching himself seriously to her following. What it was that held him back, he did not know: the

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memory of two sad, gray eyes, a voice raised for him in warning at the moment when it was about to die into eternal silence; or the nearer vision of a slender, dark-crowned maid, clad in whitest draperies;—who shall say? At any rate, Ivan was evidently determined to keep this latter picture unrivalled in his heart, let richly dangerous fascinations call to him as they might.

But the young singer herself, it would appear, cherished no such protective vision. Her professional career in Petersburg was a brief one. By mid-May, a fortnight before the opera season came to an end, Mademoiselle Petrovna had left the company and was no longer available for pleasant little suppers at the Bellevue or the Courteliain. The matter of her going—and more especially its manner—formed a week's subject of surmise at the three great clubs. But the retreat of the charming débutante was not discovered. And if she had taken with her a companion, the identity of that person was a matter rather of surmise than of knowledge. For which reasons, probably, the gossip about the affair gradually ceased, though the subject that replaced it was common enough, neither spiced nor salted, but found, by more people than one, to be as indigestible as it was unsavory.

To be plain, June was at hand; and every officer in that capital of officers, was preparing for his ten weeks of annual drill and roasting in the camp at Krasnoë-Selo.

In considering the peculiarity of the army regulations in Russia, it becomes necessary, first of all, to take brief survey of that greatest and most dread factor of all the life in that Empire, neglected though it has been by every commentator and critic of civilized nations: a factor which stands first in the life of every Russian, from the highest official of the cumbrous governmental machine down to the humblest descendant of the serfs; both of whom, with every member of every class between

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them, lives, and for ten centuries *have* lived, at the mercy of that grim and terrible,—*climate*.

It has for some years been the custom among certain foreign nations, notably the great English-speaking mother and her rebellious offspring, to set forth, in various forms of print, many individual opinions of Russia, its people, and its government. Here all the scribbling of the quasi-authoritative, statistical variety has lately focussed itself, bursting forth in a very tornado of long-winded, vilificacious ignorance. Certain subjects may be suitable vehicles for the exploiting of this species of personal vanity. But of them the most incongruous, and the most abused, has been the great, white, silent, unprotesting land. Nothing about it, from its origin to its beverages, but has had to bear the brunt of outrageous comment, for which the justification proffered is usually some six weeks' summer residence in the capital, and perhaps one or two brief "arranged" conversations (by means of an interpreter), with an official of the third or fourth grade. Such the source of many a book; though the few English-speaking foreigners who have enjoyed ten or more years of residence among the Russian people, would be slow to make a single generalization anent that remarkable race.

In this class of writings, however, and even among articles of a better type, there is, strangely enough, nowhere to be found so much as a straw's weight of stress laid upon the relentless, indestructible cause of so many of the woes of a country whose struggle for the bare means of subsistence has been Titanic. Nowhere is there any analysis of the power that has won so many victories against the one implacable enemy of Russia: nowhere any suggestion of the million strategic *coups* by which a handful of feeble human beings have again and again defeated this gigantic force. Above all, has no one ever given pause to the unquestionable fact that,

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supposing Russia to be (what she is not) five hundred years behind the rest of European civilization, she has had but one month out of the other nations' two, in which to progress. If her armies be worse drilled, less hardy, than those of her enemies, it is because they live their soldier-lives for scarcely one-third of the year. And finally, the half-brutal, half-savage, wholly ignorant condition of her one hundred and forty million peasants, is due, not in any wise to the tyranny of mere kings and overlords, but to the relentless, never-dying, never-staying cruelty of that unconquerable ruler, whose abuse of power is to be stopped by neither rebellion nor assassination; and whose heart is to be warmed to humanity by no tears, by no appeal; by the lashes of whose frozen knouts a great people has been beaten into apathy, their brains deadened through physical suffering, their children's children bearing a hopeless heritage down to generation after generation of those who wage, from birth to death, their dreary, dragging warfare with the real tyrant of Russia, monarch unlimited and unapproachable, the Winter of the North.

It is, then, in this grim fact, that there is to be found the origin of the curious custom of the Russian army to take all its lessons in the art of warfare, together with all discipline, drill, and general training, during those ten weeks of summer when the daily parade will not produce a hospitalful of frozen ears, hands and feet. During the winter, indeed, only the guard regiments, quartered in the large cities, are kept at anything like full complement, the whole army of the line dispersing to village and farm, country estate and smaller town, whence, in the first weeks in June, they come pouring into the half-dozen huge camps stationed at various points of the Empire. These camps had all of them been designed by Nicholas I., and they serve his purpose to this day. Of them all, the most important is naturally that nearest

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the capital and, therefore, under royal supervision: Krasnoë-Selo, distant from Petersburg between fifteen and eighteen miles, and about half a mile from the little town of that name. Thither, therefore, Ivan and Vladimir were about to proceed, with their regiment.

Naturally enough every cadet, before leaving his Corps, was made aware of many of the facts of this camp-life. But its more intimate details, those making the existence tolerable or intolerable, were to be discovered only by experience; and, moreover, depended largely upon the name and the reputation of the individual, and the standing of his regiment.

Ivan himself obtained considerable information from de Windt, to whom camp life was by no means a novelty. Certainly the work would be hard, the days long, and the quarters the opposite of luxurious. At the same time Ivan, rather weary of his idle existence, looked forward with some enthusiasm to aiding his captain in whipping their company into shape. Despite the fact that their regiment was one of the few that remained in barracks during the winter, it was in anything but "crack" condition. Indeed, as its under-officers admitted, sadly, among themselves, they were living now upon their past reputation, gained in a year when they had led the camp in marching, and won the medals for drill and the spotless nattiness of their arms and uniforms. They had fairly earned their nickname of the "Imperial Dandies." But that had been in the time of Mezéntsoff. Since the day when his promotion had brought his adjutant, Brodsky, to the colonelcy, the regiment had retrograded steadily. And now, it appeared, they were about to reach their climax of disgrace. Already there were whispers in the air concerning the utter incompetency of their leader. But it was left for the first month at Krasnoë to reveal to the whole army the dire truth of the whispers.

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Meantime, as the northern days lengthened till the night was a bare two hours in length, the great houses of the Admiralty quarter were closing, one by one. The city was filling with merchants, come down from Helsingfors and the various Finnish towns, for their annual holiday; and there was the usual invasion of ubiquitous tourists, whose dread of the Russian winter led them to visit the city at the dismal season when brown holland covers and fast-boarded windows shroud and coffin the corpse of the dead winter. In short, the season, Ivan's first season, was over. The imperial family were at Peterhoff. Tsarskoë-Selo was brilliant with arrivals from the cream of the court society, among whom, naturally, the Dravikines occupied a foremost place. The Grand-Duchess Helena, with both Rubinsteins in her train, had gone to Baden-Baden to drink the waters and listen to half a dozen summer concerts which the brothers were to conduct. Lastly, two young officers, Ivan and de Windt, were closing their snug apartment, and preparing kits suitable for tent accommodation. The younger of the two men, looking back over the happenings of his first winter in the great world, that first winter of his happiness, felt in his heart a pang of regret that those bright months were gone, carrying with them the great beautiful freshness which was so soon to pass out of his life forever. There might—nay, there should, be a hundred more winters, some one of which should bring with it events greater than any he had known. But never again would one of them hold for him a touch of the same unlooked-for delight, the same exquisite joy at the welcome of the world for him, that he had known this year. He wondered, vaguely, if his mother knew how all that bitterness of his birth, the sting of his father's whispered reputation, had been removed from him. And as he prayed that this might be, he yearned for one hour of her presence, of that unselfish interest in

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all that interested him; for but a dozen words of her gentle but unerring council, as he had scarcely yearned for her through the first days after her death. But Ivan was, at this time, little given to melancholics; and a laughing question from Vladimir in the next room, brought him back to realities and his man's work.

Thus, finally, on the second Monday in June, the regiment began its two-day march to camp; and bore the hours of unaccustomed walking badly enough to draw upon it the immediate attention of every colonel in the Corps. But its own colonel was not there to see. The senior Major led the men to their quarters; and it was not till they had encamped for four-and-twenty hours that Brodsky made his appearance in the luxurious double tent prepared for him at a little distance from the end of the officers' row.

A few days later, upon the evening of the eighteenth of the month, an erect, smartly uniformed young officer entered a tent midway down the narrow, canvas-lined street and flung himself, wearily, upon one of the two camp-beds that flanked the little room. It was several moments before he rose to remove his accoutrements, his boots and his clothes, wrap himself in a most un-military dressing-gown, and throw himself down once more with a sigh of relief.

It was past nine o'clock; but the sun was still above the edge of the horizon, and its beams had that soft, whitish, unnatural light of the northern summer night. A faint breeze came down from the waters of the gulf, lifting away the fetid odors of the huge camp, and bringing relief to the thousands of wet and dirty men who were half prostrated by heat and unwonted exercise. Ivan, who had lain gazing moodily through the lifted flap of the tent, had fallen into a light doze before de Windt, more than ever his companion, came quietly in, and repeated the actions of his comrade. Finally,

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when he was comfortably abed and puffing away at a short meerschaum, he turned to his comrade, stared at him for an instant, and then called him by name, twice.

At the second summons Ivan started, shook himself, and turned towards the other bed: "What did you say? When did you come in, Vladimir? How long since you left the mess?"

"Twenty minutes, about."

"And—" Ivan paused, for an instant, while a frown appeared between his brows, "they are—discussing the usual theme?"

"All evening.—It seems there are developments.—But where were you for dinner?"

The frown deepened. "Potapoff of the engineers had asked me over to their mess—very civilly.—You know I've seen a good deal of him lately, because of that survey I've been working out.—I went, suspecting nothing. But I soon discovered it was only to see how much they could pump me with regard to—to this d—— situation of ours. I tell you, it's all through the camp."

De Windt sat up, with an ejaculation of deep disgust. "Well—you didn't—they didn't get anything out of you, did they?"

"Holy Virgin!—D'ye think I'm *proud* of the fix? D'ye think the regiment doesn't mean as much to me as to you?—I left them the minute tea came in; and I lay here thinking about it when I dozed off.

"Vladimir Vassilyitch, the thing can't go on. It *can't*! We'll be degraded for good. Two years hence, the report that a fellow's been in this regiment will come near ruining him.—And yet—what Brodsky's about, I simply can't fathom. He's been on parade exactly twice since we pitched tent; and both times, if the men hadn't known his general habits at manœuvre, they'd have been stumped to obey. Zedarovsky said he could

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barely mumble.—Vladimir, the man's an animal.—But, I say, what are the developments you spoke of?"

De Windt was silent for an instant, studying the open expression of the clear-eyed, clean-cut young face before him. During the past winter the older man had conceived a friendship for Ivan such as he would hardly have believed himself capable of. Above all things, de Windt was proud of Ivan's scrupulous morality, and the almost incredible chivalry with which he regarded all women. Few men attempted to fathom the extent of his innocence. But it was a fact that conversations of a certain type were instinctively stopped when this young fellow entered a room—though it were the lounging-room of the notorious Yacht club itself. It was for this reason that de Windt paused for a full five minutes, and that Ivan's impatience was becoming visible, before he answered, gravely:

"Ivan Mikhailovitch, you've seen a good deal of our 'manly' existence this winter, in Petersburg. I imagine you've got your own opinion of it. We won't discuss that. But see here, when a man is seen continually neglecting his duty; when he is constantly rushing off, without a word to a soul, and is always seen in the same locality; when he's always half-drunk but refuses companionship, and threatens his servant with the knout if he examines the address on the letters he writes every few hours; when he seems to have lost any sense of duty or decency or position that he has attained to; what is the infallible explanation of that man's behavior?"

Ivan sprang to his feet. "You mean it's a woman?—Brotsky can't have married again, surely?"

De Windt smiled. In his mind he marvelled a little, even while he rejected the idea of either guile or idiocy in Ivan's simple question. "Why the secrecy, then?—and the ill-temper?—All the same it *is* a woman, though. We've all come to that conclusion.—As a matter of fact,

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Ivan, Zedarovsky swears he *saw* her, walking down officers' row, probably on her way to the village, two nights ago. By his watch, she had just time to catch the last train,—the eleven-twenty-five, for Petersburg. She was going rapidly, with her head down. She wore a thick white veil, too. And yet he swears also that—he recognized her."

"*Recognized her!* Great God, Vladimir, it's not—it can't be—any one we know?"

"Why not?"

"Oh!—Oh because—that brute!—It would be sickening to think of a woman's even dining with him!"

"That is probably precisely what she had been doing.—He's certainly getting rather reckless. But we compared notes; and nobody saw him that day after five-thirty; and Féodor, his orderly, was on guard at the tent door all evening, the officer of the watch says.—By Heavens, he'll have her—"

"But you haven't told me whom they say she is, Vladimir. Tell me!"

De Windt hesitated, and then, lifting his eyes to Ivan's, said, in a grave voice: "Why should you know, old chap?"

"Because I'm not the fool you take me for.—You've thought me effeminate, de Windt, I suppose, because I have never—cared to go in for certain things. But it's not effeminacy, believe me. It's—"

"Don't, Ivan! For Heaven's sake don't dream I want your confidence about any private matter. All I've ever thought was that you were infinitely more decent than the rest of us."

A faint flush crept over Ivan's face; but he waived the speech gravely, and renewed the question. "I do want to know, Vladimir; because I have a suspicion as to her identity. And—and if it should be the one I fear,—by Heaven—I've a plan that may help us! Tell me her name!"

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"Zedarovsky says that it was—Irina Petrovna, the singer."

Ivan's face paled slightly as he said, in a low voice: "I had a presentiment it was she.—Well, Vladimir, wish me success! I'm going, to-morrow evening, when I've arranged matters a little, to Brodsky's tent to protest, in the name of the regiment, about his behavior."

"Ivan! Good God! He'll have you court-martialled and dismissed from the regiment!"

"He will do nothing of the sort. And if he does—better that, than have the old Second go to utter ruin."

"But—but—if you will be foolhardy, at least wait till you've given some one of the others an opportunity. One of the majors, or the Adjutant, might do it with less danger. Give them a chance, Ivan!"

"If all things were equal, Vladimir, I'd never dream of arrogating the interview to myself. But I have a certain power—at least, my father has, that may, perhaps, properly used, influence Brodsky.—At least, if it does not, nothing else in the world will!"

After this, though de Windt's curiosity was roused and he was eager to learn the unsuspected means the use of which had been so long delayed, he could get nothing but monosyllables out of Ivan, who soon showed plainly that he would say nothing more concerning it. And, indeed, when a young and honorable officer has come to the determination to use blackmail upon his Colonel, be the purpose never so laudable, it is not a matter that he is likely to talk of, even with his best friend.

Amazing though it may seem, and contrary to every rule of novelistic heroism, Ivan was determined to do a thing that he had been contemplating for a week: to bring the terrible, unknown, but accurately estimated power of his father's map of men to bear upon Colonel Brodsky of the Grenadier Guards; to return a sobered

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and battered leader to a regiment in want; and to rescue—for so Ivan put it to himself—a damsel in distress from the power of a brutal man, for whom she could not possibly have any real affection.

In the officers' mess of the Second Grenadiers, the head of the table was habitually occupied by the senior Major. From the first day of camp life, Colonel Brodsky had taken his meals in his tent—ostensibly alone. And, even when every officer and servant in the regiment could see Brodsky's orderly running back and forth from the mess-kitchen to his tent, carrying bottle after bottle of sparkling golden wine, the reason given was still the same: "The Colonel is too much occupied with regimental affairs to appear at mess."

Many a laugh had gone round the table at this excuse. But by now the joke was growing bitter; for every private in the camp spluttered in his *kvass* at the mere mention of the leader of that once gallant regiment. Within the month, the whole Second was suffering, keenly, under their disgrace. And for this reason the youngest lieutenant, when he entered the mess-room on the evening after his talk with de Windt, found himself the hero of the table. For Vladimir had taken pains, that day, to intimate pretty clearly to one or two comrades Ivan's expressed purpose. Throughout the meal the prospect was discussed, indirectly, or in whispers, between man and man; but even Ivan was a little startled when, supper ended, there came a sudden lifting of glasses to him, and a toast was drunk which, though silent, was unanimous. A moment or two later the young officer, with a visible straightening of his body, rose, bowed, and walked out of the tent. None followed him; for it was instinctively understood that he should return to report his failure or success, before retiring for the night.

The ranked order of the table was now broken up.

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The men pulled their chairs into informal groups, and sat together puffing at cigarettes, sipping tea, and talking, in a desultory fashion, while the underlying tension increased, and more than one man wondered a little at the weakness of his knees and the slight unsteadiness of the hand upholding glass or match. Vladimir de Windt, Ivan's acknowledged chum, was doubly concerned and doubly restless. He shuffled his chair from group to group, his eyes asking anxious and unanswerable questions of each comrade with whom he discussed the state of the weather. And, indeed, the great doubt in his mind was echoed in that of every man present: what would be the outcome of Ivan's audacity? If Brodsky took the remonstrance in bad part—and who doubted that he would?—what would be the fate of Gregoriev? Poor fellow! He had undertaken a quixotic task; and more than one of his fellow-officers regretted that they had not had the generosity to warn him of what he certainly should himself have realized—the strong possibility of disgrace.

In such wise there passed a quarter of an hour—twenty minutes—half an hour—finally, three-quarters. De Windt, now on his feet, was on the point of starting towards the Colonel's quarters, when—the suspense ended, and Ivan came quietly in. The young man's face was white and scowling as he seated himself at the table, poured himself a large drink of *vodka* and drank it off, amid the breathless attention of the whole mess. For three or four minutes they waited, patiently. But at last de Windt, who could restrain himself no longer, burst forth with:

“Ivan Mikhailovitch, for Heaven's sake tell us what has happened! What did he say to you? How did he answer your accusation?”

Ivan broke out into an unpleasant laugh. “He tried swearing me out of his presence,” said he. “But that

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didn't quite do. My visit was—well, timely, or untimely, whichever way you regard it. It was a curious scene; but I'm afraid I can't explain it very fully. It was—well, too intimate. What good I've done, I can't tell, just yet. But, at least, F6ma Vassilyitch is fully aware of our feelings in regard to his—his recent mode of existence. Now I must go, gentlemen.—Vladimir, may I speak to you, for a few minutes, on a private matter?"

With a formal bow, Ivan ended his most unsatisfactory explanation, and left the tent again, followed eagerly by de Windt.

Outside, however, Ivan's behavior was unexpected. De Windt began, at once, with a flood of eager, anxious questions; but, when they were a few hundred feet away from the mess-tent, Gregoriev turned to him, saying, in a low tone: "Wait a little, Vladimir. The thing has more in it than you suspect—thank God!—You will be able to guess all that I can't explain; but you must wait, before I tell you anything, till I've read—this!" And Ivan drew, from the breast of his uniform, a bit of crumpled paper, which, smoothing out, he paused in the white twilight to read. The note, written in a half-formed, feminine hand, ran thus:

"LIEUTENANT GREGORIEV:—You behold me in an unbearable and misleading position. I am the most unhappy woman in Petersburg; but, if you will, you can save my whole life for me. I shall get this to you in some way; and, if you have any pity, any charity, in your heart, for a woman helpless and friendless, wait up in your tent, alone, to-night. I know which it is, and I shall come there as soon as I can get away and walk through the camp, without observation. All I ask is a brief talk with you.

"With unhappiest salutations, I am

"IRINA PETROVNA."

Ivan read the note through twice. Then, without a word, he handed it to his companion, and waited till

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the latter's ejaculation announced that he also had grasped its significance. Then, leading the way rapidly to their own tent, Ivan seated himself opposite his companion, and said, in a low voice:

"Mademoiselle Petrovna was with Brodsky to-night, when I forced my way past the orderly. She wrote this note and threw it upon the floor at my feet while Brodsky was facing me. From what I saw, Vladimir, I'm certain the Colonel hasn't prospered in his siege. For, in spite of all appearances, I'm convinced that the woman neither belongs to him nor wishes to yield to him. But for the life of me I can't understand her continual presence here—in this camp, where—"

The sentence died away. De Windt shook his head, but forbore to utter his incredulity. Presently he said:

"You'll see her, of course.—And you'll want me to be getting out of here. I can sleep with Deroiev, easily."

"Thanks, Vladimir.—But, by the way, you'll—that is, I'd prefer, my good friend, that you should say nothing at all of this incident. I'll let you know, in the morning, the result of the interview. And I believe that, through her, we can reach Brodsky and force what we want. I had no opportunity, to-night, to say what I had planned. He is enraged with me, just now. But I have no fear of to-morrow. Before he attempts to court-martial me I shall have a little private interview with him, and—you shall see that the matter will blow over; and the Second may take its right place again in the army."

De Windt sprang to his feet, with an exclamation: "Pardieu, Ivan Mikhailovitch! I begin to think I have never known you, before! You—in your first year out of the Corps—doing what not one of us dare do! You make one ashamed—"

"Nonsense, Vladimir Vassilyitch! I tell you, I'd be in the same case as the rest of you if it were not for—my

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father. And now, help me to get the place here in some sort of state to receive—the lady!”

So, laughing, the two fell silently to work.

An hour and a half later the great camp was still and the brief night had fallen. Ivan, sitting alone in the unwontedly neat little tent, had ceased to smoke, and had begun, as a matter of fact, to nod, when he was roused by the hurried entrance of some one whose garments brushed his knees. He rose, hastily; stared about him in the darkness; and then, bethinking himself of the probable situation, hurriedly took a match-safe from his pocket and lighted the night-lamp which stood on the tiny table. Then he turned to greet the young woman, who had thrown an enshrouding veil back from her face, and stood before him, waiting.

She was a girl whose face and form were sufficient to excuse the infatuation of a man of Brodsky's type. Surmounting a figure built on heroic lines, her noble head seemed as if it must be drawn backward by the weight of her hair; which she wore without any of the elaborate side-curls then in fashion, but parted, and coiled low upon her neck, in unconscious harmony with her classic type. Her creamy skin, her great, blue eyes, and generously-moulded features, gave one the impression of a soul similar in size. And, indeed, at this period of her career, there was little in Irina Petrovna to suggest the sordid, selfish, degraded woman of later years. To-night she and Ivan, standing close together in the candle-light, made a noble picture of youth.

Just now, however, appearance was the last thought in either mind. And, as Ivan remained nervously silent, the girl presently began:

“First of all—let me thank you for doing—what I asked. I have very little time, now. I must catch the train at one o'clock.—It has just been put on, you know: and I believe Fóma Vassilyitch got it done for—for me.

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He doesn't know, of course, that I am in this tent. Grigory, his orderly, is always sent to Krasnoë with me. But Grigory is my friend; and has always let me go and come alone.—I cannot endure the—the stares, the whispers of the men; and the awful scandal! But I came here, Lieutenant Gregoriev, to tell you the truth about myself."

"Sit down, mademoiselle, I beg of you! And let me take your cloak.—So. Now may I offer you anything?—A glass of claret?"

"Nothing, thank you! I must tell you—about myself, and ask your advice before I go. For I have no one in the world to help me. Listen:

"You think, of course, that I am—a dreadful woman. But I swear to you, by the Virgin, by the spirit of my mother, that I am—as yet—absolutely innocent of the wrong I am being forced into! You do not know the struggle I have made! You don't know what I endured before I consented to receive Colonel Brodsky's help, two years ago; and again, before I would let him visit me in Petersburg; and then before I came here—*here*, to this place, where every man in the camp thinks me— Oh! I believe, now, that *that* is why my father insisted:—that, knowing what every one thought of me, I might become reckless, and—let go. But I will not—never!—for *that* creature!" Irina's eyes blazed and her voice grew vibrant with passionate anger.

"Pardon, Lieutenant. I will try to tell the story quietly, now. You must know that we are very poor. My mother is dead; my brother in Moscow; and I was left to keep the three rooms that my father could afford to rent with his wages from the orchestra and the few lessons he gives. Two years ago, when I was sixteen, they discovered that I had a voice. My father, delighted, first gave me lessons himself; and then took me to the Conservatoire, to Zaremba. I hoped there

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to get a scholarship. But somehow my voice didn't develop as they hoped; and, at the competition, I failed. I was in despair. We already owed money for my lessons; and there was no hope of my earning anything. All my work seemed wasted. It was then, of course, that Colonel Brodsky—he had just had his promotion—came to my father about me.—He had been watching me for months, he says.—At that time, I knew nothing about it:—about the horrible promises my father made him, when he proposed to finish my musical education, and secure me a *début* at the opera.—They say now that my voice isn't nearly big enough for great parts. But at that time, I never knew this. I planned all sorts of splendid things that I was to do as a prima-donna; and I never dreamed that I couldn't pay everything I owed to—*him!*

“And now—” she gave a dreary little laugh—“now, look at me! I've not only ruined myself and my father, but even a whole regiment!—My God, Monsieur Gregoriev, what can I do? I have refused and refused and refused that hideous man. But my father owes him nearly five thousand roubles for my lessons and my theatrical wardrobe; and we cannot possibly pay him. He is willing to cancel the debt in another way:—the way you know. In fact, that is what he has intended all along. My father cares nothing for my feelings. He is as furious with me as is Brodsky. And I can't imagine how I have managed to keep away from him for so long.—Ah! If it were—if it were only easier to *die!*—But I'm a coward, you see.”

“I do not think you are a coward, mademoiselle,” replied Ivan, gravely.

“Ah, monsieur, you do not know! Months ago I understood that the world has no room for a young woman who is poor and yet—not ugly. We should be better out of it.”

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"If you are sure that your case is as serious as this, you will not refuse me the pleasure you can give—"

"Monsieur!" Irina sprang to her feet, her eyes brilliant with anger.

"You misunderstand me, mademoiselle, entirely!" cried Ivan, horrified at her interpretation of his words.

"What I mean is this. Your father is in debt, on your account, to a man who has proved himself dishonorable. I propose to free you from persecution by transferring that debt to one who will take nothing but honorable payment—at any convenient time, in amounts of any size that you or your father find yourselves able to pay. Here, at once, Mademoiselle Irina, I will give you five thousand roubles in notes, with which you can discharge your obligations to Brodsky, and repay me at your leisure."

The ensuing five minutes proved even more distressing than Ivan, anticipating them, had feared. The young lady was of a temperament both emotional and dramatic. And her behavior, to a man to whom scenes were abhorrent, proved trying in the extreme. In the end, after the amount of protestation and rather affected timidity which she evidently thought proper, Ivan's offer was accepted; and the expression of her gratitude that followed, caused Ivan to terminate the business somewhat brusquely by calling the lady's attention to the time, and then escorting her to within a hundred yards of the station. That her relief was genuine and deep she proved, by persisting in explanations of what Ivan's act must mean to her; but he regained a certain amount of his usual unconsciousness, upon perceiving that she was really talking as much to herself as to him, as she laid out her plans of payment and magnificent schemes for her own subsequent career. It was to his own astonishment that her benefactor, finally bidding her good-bye, found himself asking for her Petersburg

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address—which proved to be a humble street on Vassily Island—and found himself thinking with some pleasure of seeing her again.

Upon his return to his quarters, moreover, Ivan might have gone further than he did in his little analysis of the adventures of the evening. A man more versed in feminine ways than he, might have read much in the manner of the lady's farewell to him. For her attitude was ingenuous enough to have suggested the fact that had Lieutenant Gregoriev and not Colonel Brodsky been the original holder of her debt, the damsel's attitude might have been less unyielding. But Ivan had still his boyish belief in the perfection of all woman nature. And certainly that part of Mademoiselle Petrovna's career which he knew best, was of a nature to increase the strength of his faith.

It was nearly morning before the young officer could banish the subject from his thoughts—thoughts which had now returned to the disagreeable certainty of an approaching scene with his redoubtable Colonel. But when de Windt, agog with curiosity, re-entered his own quarters, his comrade was sleeping so peacefully that he could not find it in his heart to disturb Ivan till the *reveille* roused the camp.

While Ivan dressed, he and de Windt held a hurried conversation. A few words sufficed to inform the other of the mission of the lady; but Ivan was as amazed as he was displeased at de Windt's frankly expressed surprise at the undeniable uprightness of the young lady's attitude. There followed a consultation as to any possible retaliation on the part of Brodsky. On this point de Windt, ignorant of the nature of Ivan's power, was not sanguine. Thus it was that as he hurried off to review, Ivan's courage was at low ebb; and for the first time he began, in his secret heart, to doubt the possible efficacy of his father's knowledge.

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As it happened, that doubt proved unfounded. Once again, as a hundred times before, the powers of Prince Gregoriev were put to the test and not found wanting. Perfect knowledge of the universal corruption, the gigantic systems of graft which, then as now, ate into the very foundation of that ill-arranged bureaucracy which governed the country, was at the finger-ends of Gregoriev, himself so besmirched by that black evil by which he had risen to power. And in his notes of the deeds of possible victims, the writing below the name of Brodsky—who, though his official position was not high, was a man of large fortune and, therefore, valuable to Gregoriev's purpose—occupied a surprising amount of space.

The second interview between the Colonel and his Lieutenant took place three days after that first one, in which the unexpected presence of a lady had prevented Ivan from giving his opponent so much as a suggestion of his vantage-point. It came about thus. When Brodsky, already in a state of impotent wrath at the audacity of his officer's reproof, received from Ivan's orderly the full sum of Petrovna's debt, together with a highly imprudent letter from Mademoiselle Irina, who did not scruple to mention the name of her benefactor, the man's rage became physically dangerous to himself. It did not however prevent him from realizing the certainty of exposure of his own criminal folly which must follow any attempt of his to disgrace Ivan on a trumped-up charge. But an interview with the Lieutenant in which he could vent some of his spleen in abusive threats, would be perfectly safe, and also a source of relief. Wherefore, a half-hour after the receipt of the foolish woman's letter, Lieutenant Gregoriev and Colonel Brodsky stood face to face in the Colonel's tent.

It was an hour before Ivan emerged, his figure erect, his face calm, save for a rather bitter little smile which

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played round the corners of his mouth. At some yards from the closed tent, he paused to speak to Grigory, Brodsky's orderly, who stood, as usual, on guard, but at a prescribed distance.

"Grigory, I think the Colonel needs your assistance. He is indisposed; and you would do well to get him a drink of *vodka*."

The man, to whom the whole progress of recent events was perfectly well known, forgot his salute, and stood, open-mouthed, staring after this incomprehensible young man. It was five minutes before he entered his chief's tent with the liquor, and found there matter enough to double his perturbation. What in the world had been done to change that bawling, swearing, furious and malignant man, who had ordered a subordinate to his tent with a manner spelling disgrace to the unhappy offender, into this broken, white-faced, tremulous, sweating creature, who actually thanked his servant for service done: a thing which, during Grigory's four years of service, had never happened before?

If the Colonel's orderly asked himself this question and found no answer to it, how much more did the matter puzzle the other men and officers of the Second Grenadiers, and, gradually, as the change in Brodsky and his regiment became known, the entire camp? To the Colonel's relieved astonishment, he met with neither avoidance nor taunts from his superiors; nor yet any special disdain from his inferiors. Ivan, acting up to his own standard, had told the secret of that interview to no one, not even de Windt, who, however, brooded over his silence as an injustice. Indeed, if the truth were known, Gregoriev was strangely regretful of his behavior towards his chief. True, he had had no choice; and he had saved a woman from infamy. But his shame at the deeds of his father had marred his life for so many years, that the consciousness of having adopted his father's

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method, though in an unselfish cause, depressed him unaccountably. And, even had he known, at the time, how bitterly he was afterwards to rue his silence, it is probable that he would have acted again in precisely the same fashion.

From this time forth, however, his standing in the regiment rivalled that of its former commander, now General of their brigade. Not a man nor an officer there but gave him the whole credit for that change for the better which had begun in the Colonel on the day after his first, plucky interview, and which grew, steadily, throughout the summer, till, at a last dress-parade, held in the presence of the Czar, the Second actually captured the Iron Medal for drill—which gave them the third place in their army division. Brodsky, when he had nothing else on hand to occupy him, was a good officer, and strict to a point of tyranny with regard to dress and the appearance of his regiment. By the time of the grand reviews he should, had he had the least particle of generosity in his nature, have forgiven Ivan's victory in his satisfaction over his renewed standing in the army and at his clubs.

Meantime, the remaining weeks of camp life proved to be monotonously dreary. Ivan was not of the type of man to press his popularity and batten upon it. Rather, flattery, and the inevitable toadyism of weaker natures, revolted him; and he began once more to retire into himself, and to live again with dreams, which now formed themselves round any one of three topics: first and highest, his music, at which he had begun again to work; secondly, the sweetest of the three, Nathalie, of whom he thought as of some rare and lovely flower, not to be plucked by human hands; lastly, at first rarely, later far more often, round that girl whom he had come to regard in a measure as his protégée—Irina, whom he saw twice during the summer, and whose father,

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though he had paid two small instalments on his debt, had begun, (to Irina's secret delight, and Ivan's persistent blindness), to regard the handsome young officer ("whose father was a millionaire prince") as an excellent successor to the fallen Brodsky.

The one important fact of these weeks, however, and the one having most to do with the young man's subsequent career, was the time which he spent, in his solitary evenings, over his musical note-books. The absence of a piano sharpened his faculties amazingly; till, by the time of his return to civilization, an instrument was no longer necessary to him in composing. Ivan was beginning, at last, to know the faces of his secret gods; and to be not a little troubled at the anomalous position of an army officer, whose dreams and ambitions were all towards the arts of peace. How, indeed, was he now to reach the realm of these heavenly beings? For always, in the midst of his highest flights, there lowered above him, blotting out the gleaming spires of his Parnassus, the dark forms of those demi-gods into whose service he had been forced. And more than once, in his high solitude, Ivan heard, in the secret chamber of his soul, a strong voice of command bidding him leave this present life, drop every vanity of his existence, and set out boldly along that steep path that should lead him at last, through hardship and labor, to summits of the highest joy that can be known to human heart and brain. Then, puzzled and disturbed by his sense of the responsibility of his solitude, Ivan would perform by day his mechanical duties, and then hurry away, at evening, to labor undisturbed through the strange northern twilight, at his chosen task.

CHAPTER IX

“HALF-GODS GO”

IVAN made no mistake in these personal equations of his; but he managed one very bad one when, in his heart, he thought of fate, or destiny, or circumstance, as leaving all responsibility of decision to him, thus shirking its generally acknowledged business. Had this chosen son harbored no such audacity, perhaps the rearrangement of Ivan's life, necessary though it had now become, might have been gradually wrought. As it was, the fellow must be given a double lesson, and forced to learn it well:—by heart, in all probability. Nor must it fail to stretch his powers of apprehension to their fullest extent. Wherefore, in the early autumn, the giant wheel that is not turned by chance, began to revolve for Ivan, very slowly, without apparent aim in its pristine movements.

Summer was gone. The five great camps in the Empire had been broken a fortnight before; and officers and men alike began to let their backs relax a little, and were taking less notice of dust-flecks on their uniforms. In the suburbs, at Tsarskoë-Selo, for instance, there were now many villas whose eyes had closed for the night of winter—their recently open windows and doors being dismally boarded over; while their aristocratic owners were indulging in a last informal holiday at some one of the foreign Spas, before the serious business of winter sleighing and court balls should recommence. This year there was, however, less flitting than usual; for men in high places had been made to understand

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the full significance of an imperial whisper that the ministers and their aides remain in close touch with Peterhof and the Hermitage. Europe was under a tension of hope—and fear. And the Bear and the Lion crouched face to face, every muscle rigid, eyes glued upon each other, ears strained to catch every faintest echo from the booming of northern guns in that far-off land where America lay, already torn and bleeding with the first lacerations of her terrible inward strife.

In the first week of September, Lieutenant Gregoriev, returning from a visit to his father in Moscow, rejoined Captain de Windt in their apartment in the little Peréolouk.—Thus the court journal: whereby the young man should have perceived himself to have ascended at least one more round of the social ladder. If he did not realize this, however, Ivan was still in a very excellent frame of mind. His stay with his father had been pleasanter than he had hoped; for Prince Michael, who began to see his every ambition realized in the probable future of his son, had been more agreeable to him than ever before, and absolutely magnificent in his generosity. Ivan felt a little thrill of amazement every time he recalled the amount of money at his command. Moreover, here was a new season coming on; and one that promised him delight untold. For was it not to bring the *début* of his cousin Nathalie? She, light of his dreams, no longer to be shut away from his eyes, or voice, or even—speak of it reverently!—arms, perhaps—stood where he had stood a year before: on the threshold of the ballroom of youth. The world was to know her well; for her mother, always advocate of the *dernier cri de la mode*, had decided, months before, that she, like a dozen ladies of the highest Russian world, would adopt, for her daughter, the English fashion; and actually allow her, before her marriage, to face the living world of men and things. At the first court ball of the season she should

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be presented to her sovereigns; after which it would be understood that the charming child was in the matrimonial market, ready to be knocked down to the highest bidder.

Had her cousin Ivan, who scarcely regarded her presentation in this harsh and vulgar light, thrilled at the prospect of her first appearance there, how much more must it mean to the damsel herself, who, in all her girlish dreams of the freedom of womanhood, had never dared picture the possibility of such liberty before the event of marriage? During the coming season there were to be introduced half a dozen other young girls of her own station, who had even been in her own class at the Institute. And more than once this true daughter of the world had laughingly reviewed her possible rivals, either to herself, or to her interested maid. There were Mademoiselle Cherneskovsky, with her long, skinny neck; and Alexandra Nikitenko, whose red face and fat figure could not possibly be forgotten in the good-nature of her disposition, any more than the immense wealth of the only daughter of the Shúlka-Mirskies could compensate for her thin, colorless hair, and pale, red-rimmed eyes with their invisible white lashes. Finally, there was Olga Tarentino, whose blonde stateliness might prove dangerous, so long as she could keep from a betrayal of her vixenish temper. But pretty Nathalie, remembering the furious recklessness of this, laughed as she lifted her golden-framed hand-glass, and accepted, complacently, the ready flattery of smooth-tongued Antoinette.

Nor, seeing this young girl as she stood, surrounded by her mother, two maids, and half a dozen adoring serfs, on the evening of November 12th, in the year 1862, could any one have blamed her, very strongly, for her gay vanity. Lovelier vision than this surely never graced the somewhat bare corridors of the labyrinthine Hermitage! For this was the night of her début,

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when Nathalie was to make her first courtesies to royalty.

She was dressed in the prescribed court costume—which was to prove so trying to the objects of her naughty ridicule. Upon her, the high kakoshnik, with its jewelled rim, and the floating veil that softened so beautifully the great weight of her braids, proved startlingly beautiful. And, with a neck like hers, what more desirable than the daring décolletage of her white tulle gown, from the billowing skirts of which her tiny waist sprang like the slender stem of a huge, white rose. About her throat was clasped a double row of pearls—her father's gift to her for the great occasion. And, in her arms,—last, daring touch of her Countess-mother, who, in the matter of dress, was a consummate artist,—Nathalie carried a great cluster of vivid crimson camellias, that gave a perfect finish to a costume now relieved from any suspicion of monotony, or too conventional simplicity. The red of the waxen camellia, vividly transparent as it was, was scarce redder than the unroughed cheeks and lips of their bearer. Nor was the brilliant sparkling of the diamonds in the kakoshnik inadequately reproduced in the light of those changing eyes, which, to-night, glowed large and dark with steady, living fire.

Caroline, Countess Dravikine, gazing critically at her daughter's finished figure, felt her heart glow within her. Who could reproach her for exploiting such beauty before marriage? For at sight of Nathalie to-night, an Emperor himself could scarce have reproached his son for desiring the hand of so exquisite a creature. And, with her own great skill as a firm basis for the girl's charming ingenuousness, reflected her mother, what alliance would prove impossible to her now? For, even in her mother-love, this odd woman was filled with the selfishness of a very empty vanity. And it seemed

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now as if, with the death of her unhappy sister, there had also died in Madame Dravikine the last vestige of unworldliness.

The Hermitage that night proved a fitting field for her generalship. The event so long dreaded by her as the seeming end of her own youth, was suddenly turned into a double triumph. For, as Nathalie passed through the long *salons*, she was followed by such a trail of whispers, envious, malicious, amazed, from the women, universally applausive from the men, that the Countess suddenly realized that she held in her hands a new instrument of power; one greater than she had ever wielded before. Moreover, before an hour was gone, she knew well that she had been vindicated of any suggestion of mistake in having adopted the English rather than the French form in introducing her daughter. For his Majesty exclaimed, delightedly, as he personally lifted the *débutante* from her third low and graceful courtesy; and the Empress, most charming, most gentle, most refined of women, kissed the young girl on the cheek with a compliment that made Princess Shúlka-Mirski scowl with displeasure—her own daughter having received no more than the conventional acknowledgment. Later, as Nathalie, her cheeks burning, her big eyes cast down, backed slowly from the room, still prostrating herself at intervals, every woman present *felt* that little, insensible murmur of applause that came from every member of the royal circle—the grand-dukes indeed attempting no concealment of their admiration.

The great formality over, Mademoiselle Nathalie was bestowed upon her own, voluntary subjects: a throng of brilliantly uniformed men, among whom already—oh remarkable girlhood!—Nathalie's eyes were eagerly searching, for a certain one. He was there; and presently, catching that look, he came to her: the handsome, black-eyed cousin, whose heart was throbbing for and

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with her. And her triumphant mother would have been dismayed indeed had she known that all that evening, throughout her unprecedented success, Nathalie had moved and spoken and blushed and been still for one alone, whose eyes, from the moment of her entry into the royal presence, she had felt upon her!

How this feeling had come, whence it sprang, whereon been nourished, grown, who could say? Certainly not the maiden herself. Indeed, until this night, she had not given Ivan his rightful place with her. But henceforth she was to hold his image in her heart, and, sleeping and waking, it was to be with her, her delight, her anguish, her wonderment.

Already she had given all that was in her to give. She was totally inexperienced. But he had at last, and recently, tasted the forbidden apple. And already there had risen in him such a host of fierce, conflicting passions as left him half frightened at the forbidden possibilities now thronging his heart. To-night, as he looked into the eyes of this pure and exquisite girl, there rushed upon him all suddenly, the real meaning of man-love; the fulness thereof; the fury of perfected passion: the union of love and of desire.

Poor Ivan! The evening held things other than delight for him. As he sat beside his cousin, talked to her, held her in his arms during one of the wild, Russian mazurkas, he felt his body tremble with the terrible force within him. And once the little form he held twisted, suddenly, in his embrace. Nathalie cried out, and looked up at him; and he realized that his strong clasp had hurt her. His look answered hers. Then the child lowered her eyes, while a furious color dyed her cheeks and neck; and Ivan could have shouted aloud at what he saw and knew. Confidently he demanded of her more dances, and more and more. And she granted them mechanically, neither thinking nor caring for appear-

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ances, nor for any other person in those rooms. She was like one in a dream. Vladimir de Windt, marvelling at the recklessness of the affair, came once to the twain, thinking to expostulate with Ivan. But what he saw in the two faces turned blankly upon him, filled him with such sudden perception that he stumbled through an excuse, and went off to seek some spot where he could think; saying to himself, as he went:

"Good God! Who would have believed he could love like that!—and she also!"

But there were others in those rooms who had not his insight. And it came finally to the remembrance of Madame Dravikine, in the midst of a most amusing *tête-à-tête*, that she was no longer a free agent at balls: that she was chaperoning a daughter who appeared to be alarmingly unconventional. Leaning upon the arm of her titled companion, Madame Dravikine went forth to fulfil the first scheme of Ivan's relentless destiny.

Lieutenant Gregoriev and his cousin had finally retreated to a small and empty antechamber, where the strains of the distant band came in a soft echo to their ears. Ivan was leaning forward, in front of the girl, whose eyes were lowered. A moment before his right hand had closed, gently, over her own unresisting one; and the words he was speaking would have been inaudible to any one two yards away. Nathalie was with him in another world. At her feet, forgotten, lay the camellias, looking like a splash of blood upon the slippery floor. Ivan's head was swimming as he talked. But, in the midst of a sentence, he saw his companion give a great start. Then she snatched her hand from his, pushed him aside, and rose, unsteadily, her face deathly white. Ivan, noting the flowers, stooped for them, and, ere he returned them to her, detached one, and thrust it into the pocket of his uniform. Then he lifted his look to meet the blazing eyes of his aunt, and

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the cynical smile of a tall, gold-laced man, whose breast was covered with orders, and whose mustache and imperial were known to and hated by all Petersburg; for Prince Féodoreff was a person whose *penchant* for feminine youth and beauty had carried him into many walks of life.

The present little scene was interesting, but brief. Ivan never knew how it was that Nathalie was presently disappearing through a doorway on the arm of this man; her much-abused bouquet, held by one ribbon in her listless right hand, trailing eloquently upon the ground; while he, furious, but still dizzy from unwonted emotion, stood facing his aunt. When her cold look had become intolerable to him, she added to it her voice; saying, in a tone he had never heard from her:

“It is a pity I am forced to understand that my daughter is not to be trusted with her cousin, even for one hour,—in a royal palace!”

With this she would have turned away. But something in Ivan’s eyes stopped her, despite her justified anger.

“Mademoiselle Nathalie Alexeiovna is to be trusted with any one, anywhere, for any length of time. But with no one could she ever be safer than with me, madame!” he said, passionately.

“Ah! And your method of taking care of her, is to manage so that she shall be criticised, commented on, laughed at by the entire court during the first hour of the first evening of her appearance in the world!—Were you not a baby, Ivan, I should think you either mad or dishonorable!—As it is, I am glad to have discovered what you are so soon; though it will take months to regain for my unfortunate daughter the position she has lost through your preposterous behavior. I shall take good care, however, that she never again endangers her reputation by receiving any sort of attention from you,

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in any place, at home or abroad.—You will do well not to offer it, Ivan Mikhailovitch; for I cannot have my daughter's name linked with that of a Gregoriev!" With which brutal thrust this great lady turned coolly away, leaving Ivan, stuttering with rage, behind her.

Thus, upon the first possible occasion, did Ivan ruin his winter. Nor can it be said that he had not brought his punishment upon his own head, by conduct so recklessly inconsiderate, that, considering the custom of his country, it could scarcely be called that of a gentleman. Madame Dravikine had been justified in the first part of her reproof; though nothing, probably, could have excused the bitter insult of her final taunt. For that, indeed, holding, as it did, a reproof of her dead sister, her conscience pricked her more than once. But it had no effect on the chaperonage now imposed by her upon her hapless daughter. Never, perhaps, was heavier price paid by two offenders for the folly of a single hour.

After the night of November 12th, any man in Petersburg could gain audience of Mademoiselle Dravikine more easily than the one man whom Mademoiselle Dravikine cared to see. Nathalie, indeed, made herself miserable enough over the situation to have warmed Ivan's heart, could he have known the fact. Her longed-for world—that wonder-land of which she had dreamed so long, for which she had been so assiduously prepared, was not wonderful to her now. To her eyes, the gilding over the iron bars was very thin: the perfumed padding on the stone walls but a poor disguise of their chill impenetrability. Nor could she find in her guide and mentor—that mother, whom she so little knew,—either comfort or refuge in her unhappiness. Madame Dravikine, indeed, was disgusted and disappointed. The tale of Ivan's mad devotion and of her daughter's imprudence, had spread through the city,

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losing nothing in the telling. And Nathalie's open stubbornness and rebellion confirmed it only too clearly. To her mother's mind, Nathalie was behaving in an imbecile fashion. Suppose *she* had acted in such a way, when, as Mademoiselle Blashkov of Moscow, she had been besieged by a handsome, impecunious young officer; and, instead of throwing him over for the wealthy young Count Dravikine, had capped her sister's black marriage by one wildly improvident? Besides, she was not without serious plans with regard to her daughter, even in these first weeks of her first season. But no plan seemed possible of fulfilment when, night after night, Nathalie would make a dutiful, dejected appearance in some fashionable *salon*, and would sit, drooping and visibly wretched, wherever she was put, unless, by some unlucky chance, she caught a glimpse of the white and gold of Ivan's uniform. Then her sudden wild vivacity would fill her mother with helpless rage; and she would wait and watch, while a roomful smiled, and the rows of diamond-laden dowagers shook their heads and lifted their eyebrows solemnly towards the oblivious girl, whom no sarcastic comment, no openly insulting interpretation of her open preference, could, apparently, make her understand the importance of a union of family and fortune in the bridegroom of Mademoiselle Dravikine. Moreover, it would sound really incredible were one to make a positive statement of the number of nights throughout which this silly child lay sobbing, in the kindly darkness of her bedchamber, till the approach of late-rising dawn brought a brief forgetfulness of her unquestionably ridiculous little trial.

Perhaps, after all, it is rather pitiful that this calf-love, confidently derided by omniscient, sensible middle-age, should be so tender and so beautiful a thing. Once it is crushed out of us, we are not likely ever again to be burdened with a feeling at all similar to it. Nor is it

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often tough-fibred enough to weather the stress of the first years of married life; and come through the equinoctials of the inevitable adjustment unshattered and unwrecked. And yet—how much would not most women give to feel once more the fine, ecstatic shiver of that first, foolish kiss? And the dreams of this period—how fair, how delicate, how fragile—how utterly impractical they are! What beauties are not conjured up by the imagination, during those delicious, sleepless nights; only to be dissipated into chilling mist by the stern realities of the relentless morning?

There is a very old, very trite philosophy that can be made to replace such a state of mind. Most young men of twenty-five are gloating over it: feeling themselves sad cynics, suffering from a tragic past. Unbearable to others this stage may be. But it is a pleasant haven to the individual anchored there, safe from the recent storms of disillusionment. By January, poor Vladimir de Windt began to long for the first signs of this state in his companion. Ivan was, certainly, in a preposterous mood; and had not even grace enough to appreciate the long-suffering patience of his friend, who listened, with unfailing courtesy, to his eternal ravings over the nameless but perfectly well-known object of his undying adoration. There did, however, finally come a day when Vladimir's despairing wishes met with a kind of fulfilment.

About noon on January 16th, Ivan, returning from a morning at the riding-school, passed the church of St. Simeon. Noting the effect of the candle-flames on the velvet darkness of that part of the interior visible through the open portals, and remembering that it was an especial saint's day, he entered, thinking to kneel for a moment behind the throng of men and women by whom the church was nearly filled. Suddenly, before he had chosen his place, he was aware of an intense

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emotion. Ere he had time to analyze it, there came a light touch on his arm, and he turned to face his cousin, Nathalie, wrapped in the soft sables that matched the momentary shade of her eyes. Behind her a young serf, Anitchka, a foolish and romantic creature, bobbed and grinned with pleased excitement.

Instantly Ivan saw his opportunity. A moment later Nathalie's attendant, with a piece of gold in her hand, was forcing her way to a place near the altar, whence prayers for her benefactor would presently rise. Meantime Ivan had turned, eagerly, tremulously, to the young girl.

“Natusha!—The saints have heard me at last!—Oh Natusha,—Natusha!” It seemed as if that endearing diminutive could not leave his lips, so did he linger over it, while he pressed her small, gloved hands passionately between his bare ones.

“Oh Ivan—I am glad!—But I am afraid, too! I must tell you—everything. And then we will say good-bye!”

“No!” She started at the fierceness of that monosyllable. “Not ‘good-bye.’—Not yet!—Not yet!”

“Yes, Ivan. I am too unhappy. I must—I have *got* to stop thinking about you.—It is too hard, too miserable, the other way.—And I know they will never let you see me again.”

Ivan's reply was a tightening of his clasp on her hands. Then he bent his head, while his brows were knitted, anxiously. It seemed as if he could not speak. And she had opened her lips to comfort him a little when he burst forth, huskily:

“Nathalie, I love you better than life! Will you marry me?”

“Oh!—Ivan!” The child trembled. She would have drawn away, but that he held her tightly and strove to look into her face. Then, suddenly, she grew braver, and let her eyes meet his. In the rose-red of her fair

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face he read, ecstatically, his answer. But he was to have yet more. Unknowing that he had read her thought, she found her voice and whispered: "Yes!"

And then, in a second, he had kissed her, upon the mouth, there in the dusk of the little, empty chapel. Whereafter, indeed, she would have torn herself from him, had he not drawn her arm through his, and started forward, saying, in her ear:

"Come, my dear! We are betrothed. You belong to me, henceforth. And we are in a church. Let us go and see if they will marry us, here, now.—I believe God gave you to me just now for this very thing. And—"

But Ivan had at last got beyond her courage. It was a daring thing he had proposed; and he had not paused to reflect that, considering the laws of their stern faith, so hasty an affair would be impossible. Perhaps, then, Ivan had some right to be bitterly disappointed at her vehement protests. How could he understand that, even with her, the signs and formalities, the insignia and paraphernalia of a fashionable marriage, even more than marriage itself, form, in the mind of a young girl, the grand aim, centre, end, even, of all life. And he was asking her to forget all these!—Preposterous—love him though she did! No. They were engaged. That she allowed. And was not that enough for one day?—Ivan could not gainsay her.—Well, then, let him come at once to her father. And perhaps on the morrow—the wonderful morrow—the court journal would make formal announcement of their betrothal, and she would be that most interesting (?) of feminine creatures, a girl engaged!

Thus she talked: thus dreamed. And Ivan, in a little paradise of his own, was drawn, in spite of himself, into her spirit of enthusiasm. He promised to go, that very evening, to his uncle. And so, at length, he left her, half a block from the Dravikine house, and went his way

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towards his apartment, already beginning on the fourth year of his married life.

It was half-past eight o'clock that evening when Lieutenant Gregoriev, shivering with something more than cold, stood at the door of the Dravikine house. When it opened, he was informed at once that Monsieur le Comte was at home; and the impenetrable butler, bursting with interest, showed him solemnly to the library, on the threshold of which stood Ivan's shadowy fate, black-robed. For five minutes the Lieutenant waited, his heart in his mouth, his dry tongue vainly trying to repeat that careful little speech, the original of which he had unfortunately left on the bureau of his room in his own apartment.

In the small *salon* of that apartment, meantime, sat Vladimir de Windt, waiting, uneasily, and making futile attempts to read. For Ivan's sake he was neglecting all his engagements for the evening and the night, that he might be the first to congratulate his chum on his engagement. The minutes passed. More than an hour, now, since Ivan had bidden him a shaky good-night! And the longer the wait, the more hopeful things must naturally look. An accepted man sits late with his *fiancée*, discussing the most important question in the world, while the serfs group themselves intelligently round the key-hole. And yet, as the clock ticked off second after second, the faithful Vladimir grew unaccountably fretful and restless. Time was, indeed, when the circumstances of this wait had been more painful than now. For, in the early half of the winter, the ingenuous Nathalie had made some little havoc with the usually well-ordered mind and heart of Monsieur de Windt. But from the first Ivan had confided in his friend. And that friend was an honorable man. As the days of poor Ivan's exile passed, and his misery had grown, de Windt

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found his sympathy gradually overcoming his sentiment. Moreover, Nathalie's drooping young face, familiar to him through many balls and receptions, showed the mind of the young girl too plainly for mistake. In so far as in her lay, she returned her cousin's love. By December, Captain de Windt had set himself seriously to subdue his little *penchant*; and such was his success that, as he sat waiting here to-night, his heart was sincerely with Ivan. Yet it was not so unremarkable that when, at a little before eleven, he watched a sleigh pull up at the door below and saw Ivan alight from it, Monsieur de Windt should be glad of the three flights of stairs that would assure perfect steadiness in the voice that must cry out the heartiest of congratulations.

Even to de Windt, however, Ivan was a long time ascending those stairs. Was this the manner of a man triumphant? Was the step, now audible—that heavy, dragging step,—the pace of a happy man? De Windt's heart beat slower. His face grew grave. And then,—the door opened; and Ivan came into the room.

He walked very slowly to a sofa in the corner, and removed his outer wrappings, piece by piece, flinging them down on floor or furniture. Then he turned and came back to the hot porcelain stove by which de Windt had been sitting, dropped into a chair, drooped his head for a moment to his breast, but finally lifted his face and looked squarely at his friend. Good Heaven!—Could calf-love do that to a boyish face?—Was it really Ivan, this gray-hued, inexpressibly weary man, with the dull, expressionless eyes, and the mouth drawn into so ugly a line?—Calf-love?—Impossible!

The oppressive silence grew heavier and more heavy. Ivan continued to stare; but it was into vacancy now. He was greatly startled when he felt a hand touch his shoulder: a hand whose gentleness bespoke a sympathy

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that was very deep. De Windt had certainly not foreseen the effect of his involuntary act. At the gesture, Ivan started, as if he had been shot. Then he drew himself away, violently, and sprang to his feet, turning on his friend:

“Don’t!—My God! Are you going to *show* me your pity?—*Me?*—A Gregoriev?—Humph!” He broke into an abominable little laugh. “*They* didn’t give me much, Vladimir Vassilyitch! I heard from them all—Monsieur le Comte first; then my remarkable aunt; finally—finally from Mademoiselle Dravikine herself. Yes. At the end she came:—not alone! They led her in, you understand. She didn’t look especially pretty. Her eyes were ridiculously red. Her voice was very husky; but she had got her part well, and she spoke it to me. Her expression might have been better; but she’ll improve with practice.—There may be other fools in the world, you know, who haven’t realized what a crime it is not to have ten irreproachably noble grandfathers.

“She—Mademoiselle Dravikine—asked my pardon for her shocking behavior of the morning. She had made a great mistake, she said. Upon due consideration, she perceived how impossible it would be to avail herself of my offer; because, to mention one of many reasons, of our near relationship. Nevertheless, she thanked me for my generosity in countenancing her most unwise action; trusted that the reversal of her reply would cause me no inconvenience; *inconvenience*, Vladimir, do you hear!—and so wished me good-night!—*That* was my final answer!—Afterwards, I had a few more words with the others; but I’ve forgotten what they were.—*She*, who let me kiss her, this morning, twice,—she spoke like *that*, to me!”

“Oh but Ivan,—my dear fellow, they evidently discovered your meeting this morning, and made her do this—little fool!”

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"Oh, they found out about it, certainly.—My aunt saw her come in alone—without the serf. And it was she, of course—my aunt is a very strong person, Vladimir—who arranged my charming reception. Dravikine himself was quite civil to me. I could have stood his refusal of my offer.—And he looked uncomfortable, too, afterwards, when—his wife—came down and began to talk. It took her nearly an hour, I believe, to explain the immensity of my presumption.—I'm so beneath her, you know, her father being only my grandfather.—And, last of all, she had the pleasure of showing me what she could do with my—with her daughter."

"But—but—tell me, have they forbidden you the house?"

"She didn't say so."

"Oh well, then—it'll be easy! You must carry the girl off!"

Ivan gave a violent start; and, for one instant, the cruel mask dropped from his face, leaving an expression wonderfully different. Then all the gray bitterness closed in again. "That would be quite impossible.—Why man, consider! She herself refused me!"

"Nothing of the sort! This morning she was herself. To-night, she was repeating to you her mother's thoughts. They coerced her.—Be a man, my boy; and I'll help you! You two love each other; and you've got to marry. Do you think you owe *her* nothing?"

"Vladimir—Vladimir—you want to be kind to me. But you don't understand. You didn't hear—how that woman—insulted my race; my blood; yes—even her own sister, my mother!—You can't ask me to overlook that—even—for—Nathalie!"

And Ivan's deep groan touched the heart of the man that heard it.

Nevertheless, de Windt had been struck by the sudden thought he had as suddenly expressed. Marriage with

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her daughter, would certainly be as sure a thrust as could be given to the proud woman who had so causelessly hurt her nephew. After a time the friend pressed this view upon his companion, till Ivan, in spite of himself, joined in the working out of a strange idea: an idea of the seventeenth, rather than the nineteenth, century; but possible, feasible, for all that. So, in the end, young Gregoriev sought his bed that night not in black depression, but with his brain once more on fire with hope:—hope of an incredibly swift fulfilment of his lately despaired-of heart's desire.

This sudden frame of mind lasted for three days. And during that length of time Ivan went cheerfully about his daily tasks, meantime, in company with de Windt, working out the details of their secret plan. It was in pursuit of one of these that, on the afternoon of the fourth day, Ivan stood once again on the door-step of the Dravikine house.

Even in his nervousness Ivan noticed, as he waited, the unusual fact that the shades of the drawing-room were all pulled down. And it seemed to him, too, that there was about the house an air of unwonted desolation, which, as the minutes passed, certainly became intensified in his mind. Once more he sounded the huge knocker; and yet again: this time so vigorously that the door shook. His sense of calamity had grown till it was a presentiment. Yet his heart rose as, after a long five minutes, there came the sounds of fumbling key and grating lock; and then the door swung open before him, and he stood facing—not the trimly liveried butler, but the gaunt and stooping figure of Ekaterina, the old serf, garbed in a soiled working-dress.

“Madame Dravikine—does she receive to-day?”

“Saints behold us, Lieutenant, she may, for all I know! She and my little Natusha—who cried without ceasing for three days and three nights—went away this

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morning, with all their luggage, to the foreign land by the sea: to Germany, where it's warm, and where they will stay, my lady said, till summer comes again, and they can all go to Tsarskoë.—Saints!—You are sick too, young sir!"

But Ivan, refusing her suggestion of a glass of wine, made a few more inquiries, found that the old woman had no idea of her mistress's real destination (to the Russian poor all the world west of Russia is "Germany"); and at last turned blindly away and began to walk in the direction of the nearest "tea-house," where he could think, unmolested.

His aunt had, at least, paid him a compliment in this flight. Evidently she was afraid of him—of his poor power!—And little Natusha had cried for three days and three nights! At thought of this, all the love and all the chivalry in him rose.—That she should be abused because of an act of his!—He ground his heels into the rough, wooden floor of the little *traktir*, and began to think more rapidly.—Yes, they should have cause to fear him! Nathalie must be his, since she cared for him as he for her. It was all very simple. He could find out, without great difficulty, where they had gone. Then, at once, he would follow them, and—people had eloped before now!—His father, he knew, would not be displeased with the marriage; for he knew Dravikine to be his superior in rank. At least, there should be money enough, then, always, for his wife.

"*Wife!*" The word made his pulses throb. There remained only to discover his destination, and to get leave of absence from his Colonel. The latter was a mere form, given daily to officers at this season. He might as well obtain it at once.—So, paying his small score, he rose, leaving his drink untouched, and started off in the direction of Colonel Brodsky's dwelling.

It was a strange thing that Ivan, in his confidence of

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getting away immediately, forgot that old, unpaid grudge of his superior officer. Unhappily for him, when he made his request, eagerness was written in every line of his face. Brodsky listened and looked; paused, smiled maliciously, and then, with June in his memory, refused the leave as curtly as possible. Ivan started with amazement. But it was in vain that he argued, pleaded, raged, finally—imprudence of imprudence! even hinted at possible recompense. Brodsky, delighting in the pain he knew himself to be inflicting, became more and more inexorable, more and more insulting, till Ivan, angered beyond control, hurled out one furious epithet, and left the little room—heart-broken.

The ensuing weeks were ones that Vladimir de Windt, certainly, never forgot. For forty-nine endless days, until April had once more broken Russia's icy chains, no word came from the Dravikines; who were employing their time in a highly interesting fashion at Nice and Monaco with a party of friends; while Ivan dragged himself about Petersburg, madly seeking some distraction, finding it never. Daily his companions marvelled anew at the duration of what was, to them, the pettiest of “affairs.” But Ivan's nature was ridiculously intense; and calf-love had become, in his eyes, the most serious thing in life. At last, when he had borne all that it seemed to him he could endure, fate offered him the relief of a sharp stab in the spot where the monotony of a continuous, dull ache had become intolerable.

On the morning of April 7th the court journal—and several other papers—contained the announcement that—“a marriage had been arranged and would immediately take place between Mademoiselle Nathalie Dravikine, daughter of,—etc., and S. A. Alexander Gregory Boris, Prince Féodoreff, sometime Gentleman of the Bed-chamber to his Imperial Majesty Nicholas I.” Further down the column came another statement that, owing

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to the delicate health of the bride-elect, the wedding would be a quiet one, celebrated at Nice within the month; whereafter, during the summer, the Prince and Princess Féodoreff would return to Russia by easy stages, probably spending August at Tsarskoë-Selo with the parents of the bride, where the Prince would have time to settle into the new relationship between himself and a lady who had hitherto occupied towards him a position very different from that of mother-in-law. The beginning of the winter season would, however, see the Féodoreff residence in the Fourchstadskaia open for the occupation of the young Princess.

Ivan himself discovered these somewhat startling items of intelligence. Later he pursued all the feminine details that appeared concerning the bride's beauty, the magnificence of her trousseau, the wealth and station of the groom, and even a hint or two of the romantic affair of the recent *débutante* with a cousin, during the past winter. For one week Ivan endured his pain in silence. Then, upon a certain Saturday, he went to Brodsky again, asking him for leave and a double passport. This time the Colonel, studying his Lieutenant's face, saw fit to grant both the leave and the second request. Ten minutes after he had entered the official room, Ivan left it again, bearing with him the death-warrant of his military career.

Returning to his apartment, the young man held a brief interview with de Windt, who said little, but studied the boy's face anxiously; and, though he attempted neither advice nor remonstrance, finally made a tentative suggestion about accompanying his friend. He was not astonished at the rejection of the proposition. But Ivan's ensuing remark afterwards troubled him not a little.

"Don't worry, Vladimir Vassilyitch. I'm not going alone. There will be some one who will take excellent care of me."

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By an effort, de Windt refrained from questions. But as he watched his comrade depart, an hour later, his light luggage strapped on the droschky behind him, Vladimir's heart was heavy with foreboding. Could he have seen Ivan's first destination he might, at last, have attempted some active remonstrance; though it is doubtful if he could have made any impression on Ivan's present mood. Lieutenant Gregoriev drove straight to a house on Vassily Island: held there a brief but interesting interview with a certain young woman; and, three hours later, any one who cared to look might have seen Ivan Gregoriev and Irina Petrovna, with luggage and passports which attempted no deception, leaving Petersburg together on the evening train for Baden-Baden!

Just what Ivan's intention had been when, in his hour of madness, he committed this irreparable and terrible mistake, no one, least of all himself, could have said. Despair had driven him, for the moment, out of his senses. He cared nothing whatever for himself or his reputation, little for that of the woman he would have dragged down with him. In his mind he had some dreary hope that Nathalie, the weak and faithless, would learn of his wretched action and be hurt by it—a little as he had been hurt by her.

Before the reckless twain had arrived at their all too public destination, however, Ivan was in a fever of misery and shame. Well enough to laugh and say that the thing he proposed to do was so common as scarce to cause notice in the gay watering-place, always a rendezvous for the high half-world. But Ivan was, even now, by no means of this kind: the military members of the Yacht club, to whom such escapades were afterwards proudly exploited among their friends. All night long, as he sat upright in his place in the reserved carriage, sleepless, watching the young woman who was reclining

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opposite him trustfully unconscious, Ivan was aware of his mother's reproachful presence: and heard again the voice that had rung so dreadfully in his boyish ears: "Remember, Ivan, what I have suffered, through a man! Will you remember?—Will you break the Gregoriev tradition towards women?"

Once again Sophia, gentle woman, did her work. Irina Petrovna opened her eyes, next day, upon a different man.

Whether the girl were astonished, or pleased, or disappointed, by the strangeness of her situation during the fortnight in Baden, Ivan could not tell. He was perfectly well aware that it would be of no use to explain their true position to any one he knew. Mockery at his faith in their credulity at so preposterous a statement, would have been his only reward. But it was none the less true that, so long as Irina remained with him, she was treated with the punctilious courtesy that he should have used towards her had she been what they pretended her to be: his sister. He had taken three rooms—two bedrooms and a little *salon*—at the hotel. And the very waiters winked, solemnly, outside the *salon* door, as they served early coffee and, later, an elaborate *déjeuner*, to the two within. But Ivan could meet any eye calmly. And if Irina marvelled, she said nothing. Only, from this time forth, Ivan occupied, in her secret soul, a niche of his own, far above that of any other man. In later years, many candles burned before her shrine; and it served to keep within her heart one spot inviolate. The thoughts, the prayers, expended here without sense of conscious virtue, perhaps served her unexpectedly in the end, when before her, hopeless one, a golden gate swung slowly open, and she entered that land where the wretched deeds of her later life could blacken her thoughts no more.—At the time, certainly, she might have been impatient at the formality of her

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companion's manner, his unfailing deference to her faintest wish. And yet she was conscious that the days spent in this gay resort were happy: happier than any she had ever known. And even Ivan, in the great anxiety of his soul, found that a conscience unexpectedly clear can bring a species of content less fleeting than any causeless light-heartedness. He was giving little thought to others' thought of him. But Petersburg was dull just now; and his behavior had been a god-send to the *salons*.—Good Heavens—how they were using his name—and hers!

On the morning of April 30th, Petersburg was still a sea of mud: the atmosphere still thick with rain. Spring was opening slowly. But the ice had gone out of the Neva. Boats plied along the canals. And all the world was packing away its furs. The day was intensely dreary. But the heart of Vladimir de Windt, who was lounging idly about his desolate apartment, was drearier still. How he missed that foolish Ivan, still lost in the great unknown! How he railed at him, in secret, the while he bravely defended him, single-handed, against the world; till the day when he learned Ivan's prospect of utter calamity and took the knowledge home with him to bear in solitude. It was a week, now, since the day of his own interview with Brodsky. By this time the whole city knew all!—Gregoriev's heart-history had been dragged gayly through the mud of Petersburg society; and at last the curious world might write *finis* upon a completed story—in which the lady was now safely married to another; the man disgraced and degraded.—But the cause of this disgrace, and its injustice, only de Windt knew or cared to know.

Even he could not guess, however, how Brodsky had discovered the identity of Ivan's companion. But de Windt had borne the brunt of the Colonel's rage when

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he learned it; and de Windt had endeavored to obtain some sort of softening of the sentence pronounced upon the unhappy boy.—It was vain. And even Vladimir, as he lay once more going over the rapid events of the past weeks, never dreamed, in his heart, that Ivan was not guilty in a certain way. Men must judge one another by their own standards. De Windt had never thought Ivan effeminate—a milksop; but, had he been made to believe the truth, it is probable that one or the other of these epithets would then have expressed his opinion of his friend.

The first charge made by Brodsky against his Lieutenant was that of overstaying his leave—already for the length of seven days, and still no prospect of return. The second charge, a far more serious one, was that of conduct unbecoming an officer of the guard: conduct which, though it might be laid to the door of almost any unmarried officer in the service, nobody had ever before dreamed of forcing home for judgment. But at last, it seemed, there was a man willing and ready, for the sake of an old spite, to risk shattering his own glass house to splinters for the sake of a revenge. Brodsky was determined, immediately upon Ivan's return, to summon him to a court-martial; and, since he was not a man to keep silence with regard to his plans, the tale, with its piquant references to Brodsky's private malice, was in everybody's mouth, and was found spicy enough to sting the palate of the most jaded scandal-monger in the army—in comparison with which that of a woman of fifty years' residence in India, is not to be compared. But by the end of April even this affair had been served up often enough to have grown slightly stale; and Petersburg was now on the *qui vive* for a dénouement.

It came, that dénouement—well-timed: just when the clubs were full to the brim, the barracks crowded, the city overflowing with *ennuyée* men and women who

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were preparing for their summer flight. But the first scene of the last act was not watched by the outer world.

It was eleven o'clock on the morning of the 30th. De Windt, grown desperate under the weight of his thoughts, flung his yellow novel into the empty stove, and had just lounged back to the sofa when—the door opened, quietly, and Ivan came in: Ivan, rather pale, but very dignified: his head held high.

Vladimir turned on him, opened his lips, closed them again and gazed, silently, at his comrade. Ivan returned the look for a few seconds,—stared—read—possibly understood. At all events his face suddenly quivered, and then—he began to laugh! He passed from one paroxysm to another, till de Windt, in a blind rage, took him by the shoulders and shook him, violently, to silence. Then, under a swift reaction, he stood before the prodigal drooping like a school-boy under his master's frown. But Ivan felt, apparently, no resentment. Presently he went to the side-table, poured himself out three fingers of cognac, drank it, and then, as he began to remove his dripping outer garments, asked, rather briskly than otherwise:

“Well, Vladimir—out with it! What are they going to do about me?”

And Vladimir, half-irritated, but driven, in any case, to speech, told, briefly and baldly, all he had to tell. In ten minutes, Ivan stood looking down upon the hopeless, crumbling ruin of his life.

In these sudden crises, there are few men philosophic enough, or wise enough, to look, broadly, back, inward, and ahead, in a calm analysis of cause, effect and reason. At this time, Ivan certainly knew—had known, for months if not for years, that he was leading a life for which nature had not fitted him: neglecting a career

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bestowed upon him by a higher hand than often interferes in the destinies of man. There had been many times when, his whole soul yearning over the work to which he could devote so little of his best self, he had cried aloud to Heaven to change his lot—to banish these half-gods that kept his true lord at bay. And now these inarticulate prayers were fully answered:—and Ivan's soul was writhing in rebellion at the injustice of that which had been put upon him: the malicious revenge of a scoundrelly officer who, for private reasons, had seen fit to punish him for an offence which was daily winked at by the entire army! Indeed, Brodsky's action, which was certainly justified by the letter but never by the spirit of the military code, had caused the military world a quiver of apprehension. They looked on, aghast, at proceedings which they were powerless to stop. But it is safe to say that there was not a man in the court-martial who did not blush as he admitted the justice of the sentence finally passed upon the luckless prisoner. The proceedings lasted, altogether, a fortnight; during which time all of Russia and a great part of Europe rang with the scandal.—Ivan did not even attempt a defence; though Irina, coming to him on the first evening, went down on her knees in her plea to be allowed to save him. Even Ivan's lawyer foresaw the reception of her unsupported statement as against the testimony of the hotel clerks, boys and waiters brought from Baden by Brodsky himself. In the end, Mademoiselle Petrovna was not permitted to appear at all in court. Ivan's money kept her safely out of Russia, after the second day of the trial. And, while the girl mourned for him, she knew well that her own fortune in the half-world was made.—Such advertising as this!—Who could compete with her? Had not the papers in Europe published, twenty times, the picture of the beautiful heroine of this unsavory romance?

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In the mean time, in Moscow, the chief of the Third Section was aging a year a day as he raved, helpless and mad with fury, at the folly of his son and the treacherous villany of Brodsky. Privately, Russian officialdom was shaken to its depths. But daily the masks were adjusted, and the farce of virtue, within and without that court, went on; while the people, even to the peasants, laughed at the mockery of it all. Some sort of compensation, later on, Michael Gregoriev did obtain. In the autumn of that year F6ma Vassilyitch Brodsky went to Siberia, as the result of an examination of certain speculations, the charge of which, together with overwhelming proof, was brought by Prince Gregoriev of Moscow.

But that was a sorry triumph: the victor a broken man. For Michael Gregoriev had lost his son; and, with him, all those great ambitions for which he had toiled and cheated and blackmailed throughout a lifetime.

Finally, on the morning of May 17th, Ivan Gregoriev, degraded from his rank, driven in disgrace from the army, sat alone in his bedroom conning over the words of the telegram clutched in his listless hand: words whereby he understood that he was no longer the son of his father, but sat, a penniless outcast, alone in a pitiless, jeering world.

CHAPTER X

SELF-DESTINY

IVAN had begun to pay his price—not for a foolish escapade, but for his sonship among the Great that labor and may not rest. It was, perhaps, a tardy beginning for a career such as his must be: but it was a complete one, at least. The world lay all before him where to choose:—a blessing which he, however, at this moment, appreciated not at all.

During the past hideous days, it had seemed to Ivan that he was living wholly in the memory of his cousin. It was the picture of her that had borne him through the time of dreadful notoriety. But now, on the morning after the receipt of that harsh telegram, Nathalie and all her history with him, had passed completely from his mind, as something belonging to a forgotten existence. He rose early, after a restless, feverish night. During the fumbling toilet that followed, he stopped short, more than once, to throw himself into the nearest chair appalled and overcome by some fresh view of the situation which he was beginning, only now, fully to realize. Moreover, he was suffering physically. All through the late afternoon and evening of the day before he had sat alone with de Windt, in the next room, drinking steadily, till, for perhaps the first time in his life, he had lost consciousness, and could remember nothing of Vladimir's putting him to bed.

By the time he entered the little dining-room, where the samovar already hissed upon that cosey table, to

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which he had sat down upon so many joyous, care-free mornings, the light in his eyes was softer, the new lines in his face less rigidly fixed. He was remembering, bit by bit, the details of his recent talk with de Windt, who, heart-broken over Ivan's double ruin, and showing far more emotion than Michael's son himself, had fairly gone upon his knees to his friend, begging him to share his private fortune, and swearing that he should challenge every officer in the army who uttered one word against their recent comrade. Ivan remembered with relief how, even under the influence of nearly a quart of *vodka*, he had gently refused Vladimir's generosity. From the very beginning, when, in his numbness, the future had been still unimaginable, Ivan's course had appeared perfectly clear to him. Cast out on all sides, by friends and family alike, he would be beholden to no one in the world. Starve he could, without a murmur, if he did not find work. But charity—to the amount of one kopeck, one meal, even so much as a cup of water!—he would accept from no man: no, not from Vladimir de Windt, though he felt towards him as towards a brother. Moreover, he had spent his last night in these dearly familiar rooms; and he had accomplished the difficult task of putting his friend away from him without rousing that friend's antagonism. So much Ivan had decided, before, as he sat sipping his first cup of tea, de Windt appeared, starting to see his comrade in civilian's dress. Ivan saw that start, and understood it; but his voice betrayed no emotion as the customary good-mornings passed between them, and de Windt, seating himself and beginning to prepare his tea, said, quietly:

“Ivan Mikhailovitch, you have not told me how you are going to begin in the work you were talking of last night. How are you to get a start?—It's not very paying at best: the least lucrative of all the arts—because it's the highest, I suppose. Now, old fellow, I under-

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stand your general stand; but, for Heaven's sake, don't hurt me by refusing to let me *lend* you a rouble or two, till you get started—have made a little headway, you know!"

Ivan looked up, seriously: "Thank you, my friend. I'm sorry, but even that I can't take. It'll be no easier, starting in three months hence, and with a debt on my hands, than now—will it? I've been so pampered all my life, that I declare it's going to be absolutely a pleasure to appreciate the value of a kopeck I have *earned*. Don't you know, Vladimir Vassilyitch, that most of us would be infinitely stronger men if we had to act men's parts?—Bah! How many thousands are in just my state to-day, except that, besides themselves, they have a wife and children to feed, clothe and shelter?—That *might* come hard! But if I can't earn my own living, I have no right to live at all. Why the devil should I pity myself?" And he gave a short, rather hard, laugh.

"You might pity yourself, Ivan Mikhailovitch, because you have just had three blows about as big as the average man is called upon to bear throughout his lifetime. The mere fact that you haven't gone under altogether, says a good deal for your manliness.

"I've been thinking, half the night, about your future: trying to put myself in your place. And I swear, Ivan, by the Holy Synod, that, if I were you, I should not do what you intend about that money. A few weeks more, and your semiannual allowance is due. The five thousand roubles that you've saved and tumbled into a bank, don't belong to Prince Gregoriev. He hasn't asked you for anything that he gave you while you were—in your rightful place. And good Heavens! Haven't you surrendered enough, without the quixotism of returning to him what he doesn't either want or expect?—You might as well try to return him your baby-clothes!—So, if

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not for your own sake, then for me—for us—for the sake of those that care for you, give yourself, at least, this one little chance!”—De Windt’s voice, as he stopped, was shaking; and he turned his red face away that Ivan might not notice what was happening to his eyes. Nevertheless Ivan had seen, and had been touched to the quick. His hand shot out, impetuously: and his voice was nearly as gruff as de Windt’s as he began:

“Old fellow, I *am* giving myself a chance. I’ve a lot of expensive trash in these rooms that I sha’n’t need now. I shall sell the greater part of that and make use of the proceeds. Most of the furniture here belonged to my mother. My own stuff was bought with the little money she left me.—As for the other affair,—if I had anything else in the world for which—my father paid, I should certainly return it to him, as I am returning this money.—You can’t possibly understand my feeling; because you don’t know—the man.

“Well, well! You see, Vladimir, that I should have some hundreds of roubles, in spite of everything. And that will be enough to keep me for six months, with economy. By that time I shall prove my manhood.—Meantime, I intend that one week shall see me settled in my new world.”

Thus ended their conversation—and with it de Windt’s last effort to prevent his friend from, as he considered, deliberately ruining himself. Yet, in the end, he did help Ivan, much to that young man’s secret chagrin. And the little affair was managed so adroitly, that it was impossible to refuse the presentation of two hundred and fifty roubles which had been obtained in a perfectly business-like way. The rent of the young men’s apartment, which was by no means low, had always been divided evenly between them, and payed, quarterly, to their landlord. Immediately upon the decision that Ivan was to leave this fashionable quarter of the

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city, a young ensign of the Second Grenadiers, one to whom both young men had taken a great fancy during the winter, offered to take Ivan's share of the apartment off his hands. As he entered before the 1st of June, he naturally insisted upon paying the two months' rent, which, however, Vladimir did not send Ivan until twenty-four hours after that quixotic youth had mailed his father a check for every kopeck of money saved by him from his large allowance. The rent-money, added to that accruing from the sale of his personal effects, which were extravagantly rich, was certainly acceptable to him, in his otherwise penniless situation; and, stiffly as he acknowledged the receipt of young Frol's check, de Windt perceived that he was deeply sensible of the kindness and friendly feeling that had inspired the act. This was at least a crumb of comfort to the unhappy Vladimir; who had been overwhelmed by bitter regret at the series of misfortunes which now ended forever his friendship with the one intimate companion of his life. For de Windt, so speedily and so easily attracted to Gregoriev, was the most difficult officer in the regiment to know. This peculiarity, indeed, he carried with him through life: for from boyhood to death, he was always unhappily swift to read the meaner faults of men; and pettiness, hypocrisy, selfishness and vanity, were stamped, to his piercing eyes, upon the faces of ninety out of every hundred with whom he came in contact. By the time he had reached twenty-five, his inbred pessimism was so deeply rooted within him, that mankind, always interesting and to be studied as a theme, was to be fenced with, and generally avoided as a living entity. He rose in his time, did Vladimir de Windt, to be the Premier of Russia. But never again, throughout his magnificent career, did he find in the eyes of any man the clear truthfulness, the unselfishness, and the pathetic

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faith that he had known and so loved in his lost friend, Ivan Gregoriev.

The end of Ivan's brief and brilliant career was like its beginning: meteoric. On the 20th of April, a whisper against him whirled through the *salons*. On the 30th it had become a murmur. From May 5th to May 19th, Petersburg had stood, with open mouth, craning its neck to catch a glimpse of this monster of vice and crime. On May 21st, as Ivan walked from the court-room, every eye had been averted from him, every skirt drawn back from possible contact with that uniform which he had no longer the right to wear. By the first of June, occasional furtive eyes were seeking the chance to look through him once again; and their owners wondered what signs of shame and misery they should have the joy of reading upon his face. But, none of these eyes perceiving him, whispers began once more to creep slowly round: in a weak-voiced inquiry about the criminal. But, among all of those that asked, there was not one who received an answer; though it was not till the middle of the month that society, on the eve of departing to defile the country-side, paused for a moment to lift its brows over the discovery that Ivan Gregoriev would never be snubbed again. He had disappeared, absolutely, completely, out of the ken of his former world; though it took infinite repetition to convince everybody that even Vladimir de Windt did not know his address. Certainly Ivan had accomplished a very unusual thing. Living still in the midst of the world, he was lost to mankind; had vanished utterly from sight or hearing.

Yet poor Ivan's decisive action might have been more difficult had he known that, though his romance was over, there was yet to be a postscript to society from Nice—an epilogue, as it were, to the finished romance that had so inconsiderately turned itself into a

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tragedy. Princess Shúlka-Mirski, the intimate friend of the Countess Dravikine, had received a letter, written in the first heat of the news of the court-martial's verdict. To be sure, she tried to hide her real motive, by giving a brief description of Nathalie's wedding, and then introducing the delicate topic by uttering fervent thanks that her princess-daughter should have been preserved from marriage with that infamous creature—Sophia's son!

Old Princess Shúlka-Mirski had lived long in the world; and reading between lines becomes to some women as much second-nature as calculating the cost of a neighbor's gown. Madame Dravikine, then, had been shaken by the news. Although it was plain that she should always resent any accusation of him: probably even references to his name, in her presence, she had still not been able to refrain from inquiring after his physical health. And the reader guessed how she longed for full news of him; his reception of his disgrace; his attitude towards the world; his present whereabouts; and his plans for the future. In her own mind, the old noblewoman wondered how much of Caroline's odd letter had been prompted by the mental condition of Caroline's daughter. But she had the grace not to repeat this mental query aloud, in her world. As for others' thoughts—well, why should the ecstatic young bride, full of the delight of her title and the Féodoreff sapphires, take the least interest in the fate of a miscreant with whom, in the period of his success, she had indulged in an ephemeral flirtation?

Thus for nine days more they chattered. And then, as Tsarskoë-Selo filled, and the Nikitenko divorce proceedings came thundering down the broad corridor of scandal, Ivan Gregoriev, his youth, success, trial, disgrace and disinheritance, melted away into the utter oblivion of the twice-told, the old, and the stale.

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Ah! Could Ivan himself have gained something of indifference! Could his senses, his jangled, shattered nerves, his bruised and bleeding pride, have acquired that callousness of stupidity, how well would it have been with him! But Ivan was Ivan still: high-strung, keenly apperceptive and receptive; his spiritual, like his physical, nerves, alive to every emotion, every pain or pleasure that rose up into his present. Only to a certain natural extent had he changed. The sudden violent revolutions of his wheel of life, had strengthened his character, though they had temporarily shocked both mind and body. His mental state, during the weeks immediately succeeding his change of residence, was one of blank depression. The hand of inheritance lay heavy on him now. The hypersensitiveness of Sophia Blashkov, during the months before his birth, reproduced itself, with startling similarity, in the youth whose sensibilities had been so sharpened by long pampering in the hot-house atmosphere of luxurious idleness; and an attitude of constant flattery and suavity from the men and women in whose eyes he was always haloed by a crown of thousand-rouble pieces. To-day, how different his estate! He saw his world now with the eyes of the outsider. And what a thing it was!—This stolid dummy, from which both tinsel robe and leering mask had now been stripped for him, exposing the brutal, heartless machine that had taken such delight in crushing a fallen man!

Metaphors such as these are stale enough: yet Ivan, in his soreness, concocted many an unlovely allegory, during those first days of his lonely exile. He had been at this useless occupation for some time on a certain afternoon in June, when all his soul seemed crying to him for a breath of country air. He was sitting in his single rocking-chair, by the open dormer of his attic-room, in one of the narrow dwelling streets on Vassily Island—

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the poorest quarter of Petersburg. Day after day had he sat thus, coming, by slow, rather timorous degrees, face to face with himself and his new surroundings. Just now his eyes were closed; but the noise of the street, in which most of the inhabitants passed the greater part of their time at this season, and the fetid smells of the baking city, came up to him from below, reminding him constantly of his neighborhood.—Ay, he had got his wish!—The half-gods had gone, indeed. But the gods—how should they honor such a spot as this by their divine presence? Nay; he was alone in a strange land. Alone, yet known to many, all too well! Deserted by his own class, how should the poverty-stricken creatures who must henceforth be his neighbors welcome among them one repudiated by his father and his nearest relatives?—Ah! In this last thought lay, indeed, the key-note to poor Ivan's mental state. All through the recent, dreadful weeks, he had held in his heart a hope, however faint, that there would reach him some message, some word, some hint, even, that she—Nathalie, did not utterly condemn him: had still for him a thought of sympathy and understanding of his reckless deed. But day after day had come and gone. The trial had ended. He had left his old haunts: had severed himself completely from all former associations; and without knowing whether the woman he loved—she for whom he had virtually ruined himself,—was a happy wife, a wretched bride, or—dead. Nathalie, like all the rest, had passed out of his life. And night by night he laid him down, clasping in his arms the gaunt figure of despair, before whose dread embrace courage and manhood alike fell back, wavered, and seemed to fade from him forever.

The chronicle of a human life can never do justice to nature; for the reason that, for every man and wom-

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an, there come long periods of quiet labor or inaction when for months, perhaps years, scarce one untoward incident comes to break the slow routine of existence. The doings of one day repeat those of the day before, anticipate those of the morrow. What shall the chronicler do? Send his reader yawning to bed over the unfinishable tale? Or pass over, in a word, some period in which his subject is growing and changing, day by day, for better or for worse, till he emerges from that long, monotonous stretch, a creature startlingly different from that of the last chapter?—It is to such an *impasse* as this that we have arrived with our penniless Ivan. For four years we find scarce a single mile-stone of event along his highway. And yet the development of Ivan's secret self was swift; unusual; tremendous. During this period he grappled frequently with mighty, rising passions; crushed rebellions; bowed to revolutions carried on within the kingdom of his soul. Yet he was no weakling, to keep a diary of moods. And our only testimony of him, is from—let us say—his landlady, the excellent Elizabeth Stepniak:

A tall fellow, growing a little stooped: silent, unobliging, unsociable; yet a good lodger in his way, in that he paid his rent, and never disturbed families below him with the carousals and other performances common to young bachelors. When he had first come, he had, indeed, spent an entire summer in shocking idleness; and she, Frau Gemälin, had worried, from time to time, about her money; and again sometimes, when he had paid it without a word, felt inclined, by boldly raising it, to discover what were really his means. However, in the autumn she did find out his work. He was a kind of *musiker*; and not only played one or two simple instruments in the orchestra of a small, third-class theatre near by, but also copied orchestra parts from original scores, corrected music proofs, and orchestrated many

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an ambitious attempt at composition sent him by over-enthusiastic students of the Conservatoire. Moreover, towards the end of his first winter, the recluse began to have an occasional caller; and at such times was wont to make disagreeable demands that he get the amount of wood and peat for his fire that he paid for: not those customary odd scraps of fuel which she usually found him willing enough to accept. It was not as if his visitors had been worth anything!—They were simply musical fellows like himself; and dressed as such—without even so much as a touch of gold on cuff or lapel!

The second summer proved a trying one to the good landlady. If her lodger had not been with her so long, she vowed she could not have borne with his actions—bringing home a new musical instrument every week; from most of which he drew forth noises that either set one's teeth on edge, or made her so mournful that she would be forced to ease her feelings by a visit to the cemetery; where her faithful Makár lay sleeping his last sleep. And yet, for all his preposterous caterwaulings, on not one of these various instruments did Ivan really learn to play! Long before he attained any proficiency upon one, he would take that back to wherever it came from, and bring home another; till at last she felt it a duty to remonstrate with the fellow upon the fatuity of not getting something one wanted at first and then sticking to it. Not that she wasn't well aware how little real liveliness was to be got out of any of his instruments! She could understand his disgust with them. But let him get something really musical, and he would see. She was musical herself, and liked a tune as well as anybody. Now, "In Berlin Sagt Er," on a concertina, say;—ah! There was something possible, to be sure!

But all her advice to the silly fellow was soon seen to be completely wasted. The idiot thanked her, solemnly, and with an air; but immediately spoiled it all by ex-

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plaining that he did not want to learn to play any instrument; but was finding out the kind of sounds made by each one.—As if any but a person born silly could care to learn that!—And she did not think Mr. Gregoriev exactly a fool—or, at least, weak-brained.

Well, he had gone on, and lived with her till four years rolled round, and it was May again—the May of 1866; when Ivan, who looked thirty and more, was not yet at his twenty-sixth birthday.

So much for Madame Stepniak, and her account of her lodger's simple existence: one which furnishes us no little insight into the process and progress of that inner impetus towards a career so far from his inherited position: a yearning, from which he had suffered acutely up to the time of his sudden freedom. It is, then, somewhat curious that, throughout his former life, through his boyhood, his years in the Corps, and the brief period of his society life, Ivan should have been on terms of genuine intimacy with himself; whereas, after the dissolution of all artificiality in his surroundings, when at last he stood before himself, face to face with his naked soul, he became suddenly disturbed, uncertain, afraid of that self-confidence on which he had hitherto so prided himself. For many months he had turned from the self-analysis which would finally have developed into morbidness. And his act had met its reward. Slowly, at length, there emerged, out of its veiling mists, that long-neglected animus, which, bearing no malice for neglect, came to Ivan, and took him by the hand, saying:

“We meet again. Henceforth let us traverse together the appointed road.”

In that hour it seemed as if a great wave of understanding and of welcome overswept Ivan; and when it had passed, he knew that the soul of him had undergone a change: the great change for which he had not dared to hope. The evil consequences of his long months of

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pampering disappeared. Regret for what had been grew faint. He was glad of the present: he held out glad arms to the future—that future of labor, possibly thankless, which he was to dread no more. In fact, he was become a man, honest and clean and strong; and, for a time, he dwelt in peace with his best self, and believed his struggle finally ended.

The belief was premature. Evil habit dies not in a day. A few weeks, and lo! it was upon him again: his coward self, with all its black legion of habit, laziness, love of ease, gluttony, and petty vice. Thenceforth his spirit was become a battle-field, whereon, long and long, the two leaders, angel and devil, manipulated their forces, and held conflict upon conflict, not one of which appeared decisive. Yet, gradually, it seemed to him who waited, the standard of intellect rose high and shining over the white, luminous lines; while that of the animal grew frayed and faded, beginning to betray the rottenness of its material beneath the gaudy ornaments. Victory was finally acknowledged when, upon a November day of his year of disgrace, — 1862, Ivan, braving scorn, rejection, even deliberate non-recognition, entered the doors of the Conservatoire over the dead body of his false pride, and asked to see the director, Monsieur Zarembo.

He emerged from that building, a little later, with a radiant face, and a heart throbbing with gratitude. Not only Zarembo, but both Rubinsteins had come from their classes to greet him; showing in their manner respect, interest, nay, almost, he believed, pleasure! And, before he had made his simple request, more than he had dreamed of asking had been suggested — proffered to him: so generously, moreover, that he could not possibly take it as patronage. He had now, under his arm, a roll of manuscript music to be copied into parts—for which work the pay was good. Such tasks, he was assured,

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could be promised regularly. But there were already other plans in his brain—plans suggested by Nicholas Rubinstein and developed by the others. Ivan must re-enter the harmony classes; and there would be no charge, during the winter, since he could surely, by a little exertion, win one of the scholarships given after the annual competitions in June. With one of these—or the money he should earn in later years, all obligations might be cancelled—if he chose. For these musicians recognized their kind: and, since that long-past evening of the *barcarolle*, had marked Ivan for a future, according to their lights. As for the events of the past May—what was the army, what was a pretty woman, to them? To their minds, the whole episode had been singularly fortunate; since it delivered Ivan from a useless and foolish life; and gave them an opportunity to push the youth, willy-nilly, into revealing the final quality of his undoubted talent.—And they were to discover it, indeed. After which, according to their inconsistent consistency, Ivan having attained some slight reputation, they might turn upon him, one and all, and score him, bitterly, in their jealousy.—Which fact, with many another equally sure and equally unpleasant, remained unsuspected by the happy man who ascended his four flights of stairs that snowy night to light a sacrificial fire to the arbiter of his soul, the first of the promised gods, who had stolen in upon him unawares, and now cast off his whole disguise: the god of labor loved.

At last Ivan's days began to be full: full of a dry work that contained many sources of keen interest to him. Certainly the greater part of it was the merest drudgery. Each afternoon he bent over a desk, laboriously copying manuscript music; meditating upon his morning of study at the Conservatoire; or seeking to hear the music the notes and signs of which he had been writing down. And this last exercise, idle though he thought it, in

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time bore excellent results. In the evening he still played in the orchestra of the Panaievsky Theatre—though he had now risen from “all-round man” to the sole charge of the kettle-drums. Even the performances on the shallow stage above him held for him keen interest; and, without other tuition, he gained here a knowledge of dramatic construction that served him well later, during the creation of his few operas. For, in Ivan, great talent found itself mated to love of earnest work:—a union to which the world has, through all time, owed its greatest masters of art and science.

During eighteen months—until the autumn of 1864, Ivan’s working-day averaged fourteen hours. He studied constantly under Anton Rubinstein; and had the privilege, during that time, of many a private lesson under the master who at that time looked upon him as his special discovery. During the summer, he took a few pupils from the poorer ranks of the Conservatoire: students, who, by means of coaching during the summer, and double work in the winter months, managed to shorten their years of study, that wage-earning might begin as soon as possible.

At the beginning of the new winter season, Ivan passed through an experience deeply dreaded, and found himself the recipient of a happiness greater than he had dreamed possible. At the earnest solicitation of his master, he once more made his appearance in the *salon* of the Grand-Duchess Helena: this time as a paid accompanist. The moment in which he crossed the once familiar threshold, seemed to him the most difficult of his lonely years. And then, in another instant, he was in a new country! Her Imperial Highness greeted him with a cordiality such as she had never before shown; and the assembled company only waited for the royal greeting to crowd about him, hands out-stretched, with a welcome that brought a lump to his throat. If his

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playing was very bad that night: if his cold, damp fingers could scarcely move across the keys, no one noticed it save, perhaps, his hostess, who surely, in her beautiful wisdom, understood it well.

Years of hard study and constant mechanical training had kept Ivan safe for a long time from immature and damaging attempts at creative work. But with the ending of this winter of 1864-65, the spring began to bring him a renewal of dreams and aspirations too vivid and too strong to be written off by any fury of exercise, work, or self-deprecation. Melodies of long ago began to ring again in his ears. Old bits of harmonization, half forgotten, returned upon him with new meaning in their crude successions. Vague ideas grew clear. And there was a turmoil within him which he recognized, instinctively, as the creator's imperative summons. Still he held off, remembering the warnings of attempting work without tools—of production before the acquirement of sufficient technique. No use! The more he fought, the more did his brain seethe—fired by the events of his dead life, its incidents, its dramatic climaxes, its final tragedy, all of them turned into a new form, a new meaning: resolving themselves persistently into his one means of expression. Thus it was that, before he understood the significance of the change in him, he realized at last the great fact that his first great work had risen to completion, as it were, in a night, and lay now awaiting only the mechanical transcription to paper. It was ambitious, this first work—the “Symphony of Youth.” Its first movement was *allegro agitato*, *adagio*, and *allegretto scherzando*, picturing each vivid phase of early boyhood; next came the requisite *andante*,—a dreaming melody, expressing all the yearning, the vague melancholy of pre-adolescence; then the third: a rippling *scherzo* of youthful pleasures, gayety, young loves and joyous dances; finally a tempest-

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uous *finale: allegretto sforzando é appassionato*—the rising of the burdens of manhood, of new ambitions; the descending of the sadness of man's responsibility, the reluctant passing of the careless, heart-free joys of youth.

The idea and its possibilities took possession of Ivan so much to the exclusion of all else that by mid-May he capitulated to it, announced his intention of taking a holiday for the summer, and secreted himself in his old room, confiding in no one, instinctively afraid of discouragement from his master and benefactor. But it was a reckless business, this resignation of all means of livelihood. He had very little money saved; and, do what he would, he could not hope, if he was to keep out of debt, to buy much nourishing food. Through stifling days and pitiless, white nights, he labored, alone, incessantly; sparing himself in no way; foolishly refraining from exercise and out-door air, because both of them sharpened his constantly unsatisfied appetite. What more natural, then, than that September should bring with it fever, delirium, bad nursing, heavy bills; and October a convalescence rendered doubly slow because of persistent malnutrition. From this he passed, at the end of this month, into a haggard semblance of health, accompanied by that black depression which cries aloud for rest and complete change of scene.

Neither of these, however, could Ivan get. Doggedly he returned to his duties, and began, bit by bit, to pay off his debts: those debts which, five years ago, would have appeared so absurd; and which were now the nightmare of his existence! But, though he managed to accomplish the usual amount of work, and had even occasional snatches of a brilliance which astonished himself, it was not difficult to read in his face the signs of approaching break-down. He had lived too long upon his nerves. The Rubinsteins, consulting together, shook their heads over him, wondered how his pride was to be

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circumvented, and finally hit on a scheme which was, for them, more than usually tactful. Anton created a new medal and scholarship, to be presented thereafter annually for the best musical setting of a classic poem which was to be the same for all. It was an exercise in which Ivan delighted; and there was little doubt as to the destination of the prize of the first year. Fate treated him kindly, at last; for he managed to keep up till after the contest. His setting of Schiller's "Ode to Joy" was incomparably the best of the sixty efforts. So, with five hundred roubles, he paid the remainder of his debts, and found himself, one week later, in Vevey, a nervous wreck, truly; but free at last from mental worry, and drawing in hope and life with every breath.

It was September before Petersburg saw him again—penniless, but full of such vigor and energy as were equal to a fair-sized capital. And he had not been in the city more than a fortnight, before he discovered that one more stage upon his rough road was over; and that the bend beyond the half-way house hid tremendous possibilities.

It was the afternoon of the 16th of the month. Ivan was at his table, bending over some half-finished parts for an orchestra overture, when the door of his old attic opened, unceremoniously, and Nicholas Rubinstein strode in.

CHAPTER XI

THE MOSCOW CONSERVATOIRE

IVAN rose from his place, smiling a welcome. In spite of himself he had always liked Anton less than the unfamed brother whom Petersburg supposed just now to be in Vienna, attending Anton in his new series of electrifying recitals. But the rough, strong, kindly face, short, muscular figure and genial smile of Ivan's visitor were unmistakable. He, then, after shaking hands with the younger man, put down the huge water-proof portfolio that he bore under his arm, shuffled out of the alpaca overcoat that he persistently wore, summer after summer, threw his hat upon the bed, and, with a face more than usually serious, drew a chair to the other side of the work-table, and sat down.

"I'm interrupting your work," he remarked, as Ivan shoved his copy to one side and seated himself also. "Yes, I'm interrupting; but you can spare the time, I believe, considering my errand."

"I've plenty of time.—But—there's no trouble in Vienna,—no accident, I hope?" Ivan's tone took on a shade of anxiety.

Nicholas, who was engaged in lighting a very black cigar, did not answer till the blue smoke was rolling up satisfactorily. Then he replied: "No, I left there a week ago. Anton is with Bruckner and one or two others, and didn't need me. But I—well, there's a most annoying business about this Moscow affair!"

"What? The new Conservatoire?"

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"Yes. You know Serov signed a contract to take the intermediate classes: theory and orchestration, you understand."

Ivan nodded. "In June, before I left, he was full of it."

"Um—yes. And he signed the contract, remember!—But that was before they began to fill his pockets and his head with the success of "*Reseda*"—that new opera of his—very mixed style, and too light.—No depth at all.—No classic restraint. Bald melody—thin little *tum-ti-tums*, *pizzicato*, for accompaniment! But he found a new theme, the other day, and has gone mad about it. Now there's nothing to be done with him. Wrote me ten days ago to say that he absolutely must stay here this winter to keep his proper musical 'atmosphere.'—Oh these musicians! Not an ounce of business integrity in the lot of 'em!—Of course, we could hold him to the contract. But do we want a teacher that hasn't a thought for his classes?—Anton says, make him go to Moscow! I say, let him stay here. But I'm worried to death over it. I'd do his work myself, only I'm up to my ears in classes and lectures as it is.—And the thing opens in November!—Who is to take the main body of the students, for Heaven's sake?"

"Laroche!" shouted Ivan.

"Irresponsible; and—too much money."

"Um—a—oh—this new man we hear of—Monsieur Kashkine, of Moscow."

"He's literary, rather than musical. No real time for classes."

"Wieniawski, then?"

"By nature a virtuoso. It would be rather a pity to waste his technique and pin him down to a teacher's life. With a composer, the thing's different. One can always find time for composition, even while teaching. But practice knocks any possibility of other work on the head at once."

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There was a pause. Ivan, at the end of his suggestions, began to feel puzzled at Rubinstein's coming to him with such questions at all. Presently, however, he decided that this was not the real object of the visit; and asked, with a change of tone: "Well, have you some new work for me?—Some copying?"

"I've got some new work for you, certainly. But not copying."

"What then?"

"Well—this. I want you to leave here for Moscow, with me, in five days; and prepare to take Serov's place in the new Conservatoire."

"*What!*" The exclamation was low, and absolutely incredulous.

"You heard me. Aren't you perfectly well fitted to teach theory and harmony laws, and the principles of composition, to a lot of ignoramuses, at one hundred roubles a month?"

Before Nicholas had finished, Ivan jumped to his feet and began to pace up and down the attic-room. In his cheeks there appeared two vivid spots of red; and his eyes shone, peculiarly. Rubinstein sat puffing at the pipe for which he had just exchanged his cigar; while he stared about the bare room, and waited, patiently, for his sudden proposition to sink home. He was unprepared, however, for what came. Ivan presently stopped in front of him, saying, hurriedly:

"You know I was born in Moscow?"

"I have heard it."

"My father lives there."

"That will be fortunate for you."

"Oh! but—he—I'm disinherited, you know! And—where should I live, there, on my hundred roubles a month?"

"Well, it is not a large sum; but it can be done. Besides, as soon as we prove the thing a success, we'll in-

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crease the salaries. Also, you shall have time to work on your own little ideas.—Ah! I have it!—I've an apartment, close to the Conservatoire. It's furnished, and Shrâdik—violin, you know—is living there already. He has one room, I another. Will you take the third? We'll share the parlor.”

“Oh—oh Nicholas Ivanovitch, stop! You misunderstand!—The pay is double what I live on now.—I mean, only, that—for me—there are memories in Moscow: bitter ones.—I'm used to ostracism here; but in Moscow—where my mother's family has always been—Oh! I don't see my way to it!”

“Then I'll see it for you. Look here: this offer is going to help you up the ladder. It will prepare the way for your new place in the world:—the one you want to gain for yourself, which is far better than anything inherited. You've more promise in you than any of these other lumbering creatures—even Serov himself. And now—you refuse your great chance because you'll be living in a city where your father is!—Bah, Ivan! I never thought you a school-girl before!—Must it be Laroche, then?”

“By Heavens—no!” The words leaped from him involuntarily; but Ivan let them stay.

Two minutes afterwards the pipe was once more going, placidly; and by the time the room was hazy with smoke, Nicholas had explained the details of his plan, and had departed, leaving Ivan alone, dizzy with the prospects of his new life. Within a fortnight, he could turn his back on Petersburg, the hated city.—Small time now for the long-delayed placing of his symphony: for the completion of the concert overture and the tone-poem already forming in his active brain! Better to wait, and take his chances in the musical world of Moscow.—His work! His profession!—Did this unexpected offer leave him free enough to develop the future of his dreams?

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Ah well! No use pondering that. The affair was settled; and circumstance must take care of the rest. Destiny is probably foreordained. What reason, then, in struggling over and doubting one's actions? Meantime, a new theme was taking possession of his mind. Moscow, and the idea of seeing it again, had brought old memories down on him; and he wondered if he might not gratify his sudden longing, and let his father know at least that he was alive, and well? The second wish was graver; touching his hidden self more nearly. Could he, should he—would it be humbling his pride too much, if he went to see his aunt—who had just returned to town for the winter?—Would she let him come to say good-bye to her, give him some faint echo of the by-gone friendliness?—Time certainly had drawn the poison from Ivan's wound, since he could debate this question, which, after all, was only the cloak to another: that of the possibility of learning how his cousin fared. For of her, the young Princess, he had learned practically nothing since the time of her hasty marriage in a distant land. That she spent her life in and around Petersburg, he was aware. But he had never once seen her in the city; and had never been sure of her immediate whereabouts. That her place in his heart had never been usurped, nor her image grown dim with the passing years, was all he realized to-day.

Ivan's inheritance from his mother was a temperament sensitive to the point of morbidness. This unhappy characteristic had been fostered only during his early years. But he had not attempted to change it till the period of his disgrace plainly offered a choice between a resolute stifling of his pain or downright madness. Being the son of his father, he made the practical selection. And he saw now that the years of his independent poverty had done much towards the development of common-sense, and the extinction of that

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hypersensibility which had so marred his otherwise fine nature. Moreover, just the regular, daily routine of work, and the friendly rivalry with his fellow-students, had imbued him with the manly courage with which he faced the world. Yet not one of us can permanently alter his temperament; and, to the end of his life, Ivan was destined to suffer periodic torments from shyness, natural reticence, and a never-dying sense of shame at the memory of that unjust disgrace which by this time many interpreted rightly, and many others had completely forgotten.

For some years, in fact since his boyhood, Ivan's mental attitude towards his father had been as to a black shadow which had lain across the whole of his mother's existence and the greater part of his own. When his change of feeling began, or how, he did not know. Possibly it was as far back as the trial and conviction, through his father's indictment and evidence, of Brodsky, his own bitterest enemy. Certainly its development had certainly been unconscious. And to-day Ivan was himself surprised at his secret feeling of tenderness towards Prince Michael, as for one aged and broken with grief. After the absolute silence of four years, he found it almost a pleasure to write the lonely man, telling him of his little success, his sudden change of residence, something of his ambitions for the future; but not a word of his long struggle with poverty, and the lonely austerity of his life. In the letter he enclosed an address—that of Rubinstein's Moscow apartment; where, even should it not be his own abode, communications at least would always reach him. And if his excellency would but send some word, however brief, Ivan would gladly come to see him—not as a son, necessarily, but as one to whom Prince Gregoriev's welfare could not but be a matter of supreme interest and concern.

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The writer of this missive spent time and pains upon its composition; and succeeded in expressing himself with clearness and considerable delicacy, though making very evident the fact that he neither desired nor would accept the slightest pecuniary assistance from one who had so furiously disowned and deserted him in his hour of sore need.

It may have been this final implication, or, more probably, the one other unfortunate suggestion in the letter, relating to the importance to the writer of Michael's welfare—(interpreted *health*)—which the father angrily deduced as a desire for his death and the hope of speedy inheritance, which once more undid Ivan with the desolate, stubborn, remorsefully remorseless old man, to whom, in his secret soul, the boy was still the apple of his eye, the greatest and final disappointment of his harsh life. Certainly Ivan waited in vain for the requested message. But before this disappointment came, he had passed through another anxiously waited experience. For, on the same day that he posted the letter to Moscow, he took his courage into his hands and went, for the first time since the February of nearly five years ago, to the house in the Serghievskaja, where a brisk young footman informed him suavely that Madame la Comtesse received.

It was forty minutes later when Ivan emerged from the house, his brain whirling in as great a tumult of emotions as were the hearts of two women whom he left behind him. Yet the idea of emotion on his aunt's part would never have occurred to him; and of the other, he knew nothing. Countess Caroline was past mistress in the worldling's art of subtle, refined, undiscoverable patronage, snobbery, indifference—insult if you will. With apparently exactly the same quiet voice and manner, she could warm the soul of a Royal Duchess with the delightfulest flattery; while, in the intervals between

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phrases, she would shrivel an undesirable caller into a state of quivering apology for the presumption of invading the house of so lofty a personage as Madame Dravikine.

Thus, when her nephew presented himself before her, Countess Caroline's heart gave a great throb of welcome and of pity; but her impassive face grew only a little colder, and, though in the first seconds of looking into the eyes of Sophia's son, hearing the familiar, inherited tricks of her sister's speech, she was betrayed into the suggestion of a genuine frankness, she soon bethought herself of an imminent danger which both were in; and she instantly set herself to drive him from the house at the earliest moment. For the Countess had been momentarily expecting her daughter, who was to come to tea this afternoon; and for many reasons she dared not permit those two to meet again. Therefore poor Ivan found himself treated to a succession of monosyllables so chilling that there rose up in him, first, a great wave of bitter disappointment and grief; and then a hot anger that held him immovable in his seat, in the face of a now open attack of rudeness such as few women and no man had ever before endured from this experienced *mondaine*. At last, seeing that, while he gained nothing, he was probably losing much by his persistence, he rose, restrained, by an effort, any expression of the fury that his aunt read plainly in his eyes, and left her. Nor did he ever know that during the last fifteen minutes of his stay Nathalie,—Nathalie, her dear face lined with grief and care, her beautiful eyes faded and dull from long bodily pain and the mental anguish that has passed the bounds of tears,—Nathalie, big with child for the third successive autumn of her wretched married life—had sat not twelve feet from him, overhead, in her mother's boudoir. For there she had retreated, on learning that madame was entertaining a young man who was not an

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habitué of the house, and whose name had not been given for announcement.

Still Ivan's visit had not been wholly fruitless. He had elicited what he had chiefly wished to learn. Unconsciously, because the subject was the present burden of her nights and days, Caroline had betrayed the fact of her daughter's unhappiness. Yet she would have maintained, and truly, that she had not permitted three sentences to pass her lips on the subject of the Princess Féodoreff. But the acuteness of the *mondaine* pales before that of the lover. Caroline knew nothing of what Ivan took away with him; nor dreamed that, from this hour, Nathalie's load became the secret burden of another. But perhaps in that brief hour, when her bitter tongue had so belied the crushed emotion of her heart, Madame Dravikine regretted, not for the first time, her cruel rejection of the young man who, it was plain to see, had retained his fidelity to her unhappy child through all his years of separation from her and ignorance concerning her married life.

Despite the plans of Nicholas Rubinstein, his departure for Moscow, and, by consequence, that of the under-teacher, was delayed for some weeks; and it was only on the evening of October 2d that Ivan, with all his earthly belongings in the two valises beside him, and his whole fortune—forty roubles—in his pocket, stood by his companion in front of the Petersburg station in Moscow, waiting for a droschky and looking once more upon the lights and many-colored domes of his native city.

Three hours later, in a comfortable little room on the third floor of a dingy house of the Brionsovskaja, three men, who had been lingering over a hearty supper, rose to their feet, glasses in hand, to repeat the toast just suggested by the youngest of the trio:

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"To the Conservatoire of Moscow—and her director: the friend and benefactor of all Russian musicians,—Nicholās Rubinstein!"

The first six words rang out from three voices; but before the rest the oldest man put down his glass, laughing as he said:

"You prevent my drinking, Ivan Mikhailovitch. No. Let the rest of the toast be: "to the friendship of the three who inhabit this apartment: thou Boris, and thou Ivan,—star of the future, and finally my old, plain self!"

Boris Shrâdik, the young violinist who formed the third inmate of the Rubinstein apartment, quickly seized the speaker by the right hand, while Ivan grasped his left; and then the younger men, setting down their glasses, clasped hands across the small table.

There was an instant's silence. Then the glasses were drained, and Ivan, to whom the evening had brought many a throb of sentiment, walked away to the window for a moment, while even Rubinstein loudly cleared his throat.—They are an emotional people, these musicians; and, despite the pettiness which success seems to raise in them, they are, in private life, genial and generous, and intensely loyal to their kind.

It was not wonderful that the youngest professor of the Conservatoire speedily made himself at home in his new abode. Moscow might hold many sad memories for him; but it was the place which must always be his home, after all. For where the first years of childhood are spent, there, however humble the place, are rooted deep some of the soul's loveliest plants: there rest associations of love and of joy far more powerful, more unforgettable, than any that can be made in after life: and these make a consecration recognized by the most careless, the most unsentimental of us all. Ivan, indeed, rejoiced daily that he had not to begin life again in a strange city. But he soon perceived that he had formed

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an astonishingly mistaken notion of what that life was to be. He had believed it would bear a strong resemblance to the existence he had been leading for the past years: so many afternoon hours among students—this time as teacher, instead of pupil; so many for rest, meals, exercise; the rest of the time spent in quiet solitude, at his own beloved work.

Two thirds of this programme he did, indeed, carry out; though not without constant difficulties in escaping those friendly spirits who would have kept him for hours at a time over a meal, out of sheer conviviality. And it was three weeks or more before the absent-minded dreamer became convinced of the hopelessness of attempting his own work in that particular atmosphere. For Ivan was of a type, fortunately rare, which demands a large amount of daily solitude. Loneliness he might dread—and bear. But isolation during his working hours he must have, at whatever price. And to expect isolation in Nicholas Rubinstein's apartment, was, truly, to cry for the moon. Regularly, all day, the little living-room overflowed with visitors; nor did any of these hesitate to comply with any requested musical exhibition, despite the fact that, during eight hours of the working day, the apartment resounded with violin exercises emitted from the bedroom of young Shrâdik. Even this was not all; for the house was in the heart of the musicians' quarter. And all day, from apartments below, from rooms above, came an endless banging, shrieking and caterwauling from embryonic *tenori* and *virtuosi*, such as, within a month, would have cured all but the most persistent music-lovers of any further desire for the expression of that abstract art.

Ivan *was* of the most persistent. Therefore, towards the middle of November, his nerves raw and quivering under baffled attempts to compose against the Devil's Chorus rising to heaven from every side, he sought, and

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finally found, salvation from incipient madness, in the refuge afforded by a neighboring *traktir*, much frequented, o' nights, by university students, but as deserted through the morning hours as had been Ivan's yearned-for attic.

Hither, to a small parlor, he removed, by permission, his piano and his writing-table. And tolerated, nay, encouraged, by a musical and friendly landlord, Ivan began to forget his recent care-infested, nervous days in the labor of his love. Provided, on his arrival, with a glass of *vodka*, and ending by eating there his noonday meal, the young composer, assured by his hosts that any obligations he might be under were, by these purchases, quite repaid, would seat himself at instrument or desk, and, in that curious compound of mathematical accuracy and free flights of imagination that goes to make up music, forget himself and his surroundings completely. Nor was he ever at a loss for material. At this period, indeed, his brain was beset with far more ideas than could ever properly be developed. For many weeks, indeed, he confined himself to but two things: the overture, as a conscientious necessity; and a tone-poem, in which, as an unconventional form, he might embody the best of his vagrant fancies, and the rich, unlawful harmonizations wherein already, fresh though he was from classical remonstrance, he delighted. But when he found that the "day-dream" could not be made to contain half his delighted ideas, he began to jot them down separately, and throw them into the growing sheaf of manuscript which, by-and-by, was to be worked into the shape of (oh whisper it reverently!) his first opera, "The Boyar."

At the hour in which the young composer (sometime between half-past twelve and one o'clock) habitually turned his steps away from the kindly "Cucumber," his mood, likewise, automatically changed. From the

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fanciful creator he became the pedagogue, the serious doctor of music, whose mind was occupied chiefly by elementary exercises that should tend to draw the incipient conceits of youth away from the alluring empty fifth (a form in which his other self delighted), and the equally insidious octave parallel. At times he advanced to laws of even greater moment, and corresponding intricacy. For he took a genuine interest in his pupils; and, in that first year of his teaching, carried his class to surprising lengths, nor let them betray any evidences of unthoroughness when they went trembling up to the examinations provided by the great Anton himself, in the mid-year term.

Ivan's estimate of his pedagogic labors was very humble. But Nicholas Rubinstein, who himself taught for nine hours daily, soon came to appreciate the conscientious work of his subordinate, clearly perceptible in the excellently trained classes who came up to him for their monthly competition. And this satisfaction was soon substantially expressed. Upon the formal opening of the new building of the Conservatoire in December, Ivan found his salary increased by twenty-five roubles monthly. Nor did he suspect what Nicholas went through to obtain this favor; though he was not slow to notice the change of manner which Anton of the jealous soul had already begun to betray towards him.

The month succeeding the opening of the great, white building, was replete with change. First of all, young Shrâdik departed for a concert-tour, through Austria and Germany; and, though he and Gregoriev parted most cordially, it was with a feeling of new freedom that Ivan looked about him, when the persistent practiser of trills and runs was gone to show the great world the results of meritorious study. Two weeks later, came the welcome if astonishing news that Ivan, whose classes had grown rapidly, was to have an assistant, in the per-

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son of young Laroche:—his nearest friend in the Petersburg student days. And when this young fellow replaced the violinist in the Rubinstein household, Ivan felt the cup of his contentment full.

In many ways, indeed, this period was one of the happiest of Gregoriev's career. It was at this time that he formed those several friendships which stood him, in his after years, in such rich stead. Of the many professional men who frequented Nicholas' society, one of the foremost was Monsieur Kashkine:—he who afterwards did so much to make Ivan known to his world. From the first these two young men took to each other with the utmost congeniality. Next to the writer, Ivan's fancy locked itself with that of bullet-headed, homely, great-hearted Balakirev: a man who has been the inspiration of a dozen greater than he; who, for thirty years a pillar of Russian music, has let his greatest ideas go to feed the brains of those who have learned to stand towards him, as the public towards themselves. Finally, there was young Ostrovsky, later one of the great playwrights and librettists of the country; who, even at this time, had come into popularity in Moscow through some of his lighter comedies, and a farce or two, produced at the Little Theatre.—Of these three men, not one who did not early appreciate the quality of Ivan's few productions; and agree enthusiastically—behind Ivan's back—with a prophecy made by Nicholas Rubinstein, which, had its subject heard it, would have caused him to retire, stuttering with indignation. Never, in truth, was young workman more modest than the Gregoriev of that day. But he had the grace to appreciate his friendships, and to cling to them as if he understood, even then, from what blackest depths of depression and melancholy they were, by-and-by, to rescue him!

Looking back upon the early days of his musical life, it was, as a matter of fact, to the occasion of the formal

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opening of the Conservatoire that Ivan pointed, as marking the real beginning of his prolific career. Yet, for years after that night, he could not recall it without a twinge of bitterness. For, at the time, he was in the throes of the first of his long series of disappointments:—the cutting rejection of his symphony by the temporary director of the Petersburg orchestra. The manuscript had been returned to him with a communication which had caused stout Nicholas a penance for profanity; though even he failed to surmise the part that two men had played in this insult to a piece of work which, if crude in spots, was still far too magnificently broad, too thoroughly original, to deserve half the criticism incited by Ivan's former masters, Zarembo and Anton Rubinstein; to whom the manuscript had been sent.

When these men came down to Moscow for the celebration of the opening of their Conservatoire, neither one of them, probably, escaped some slight twinge of conscience at the frank, deferential greeting given them by their whilom pupil, whose slight pallor and weariness of expression alone betrayed his sickening disappointment. But the two were relieved, also, that no hint of their complicity in injustice had leaked out; and they played cheerful parts at the exercises and banquet which were to mark the completion of their earnest labors for the scheme in hand.

At the dinner, which began at seven o'clock on the night of December 3d, were the directors and one or two of the largest stockholders of the enterprise; together with all the professors, and some dozen of Russia's celebrated musicians and writers. The meal over, Anton Rubinstein, originator of the plan, and Zarembo, his able co-adjutor, made brief speeches. There were one or two impromptu replies; a little discreet cheering; the customary toasts to the Czar and the persons and the subject

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in hand; and then Ivan, carried out of his usual shyness, proposed the health of the sister Conservatoire of St. Petersburg, which was loyally drank. Afterwards, the same young professor, who had unconsciously been the cause of the abandonment of the proposed concert after the banquet—owing to Nicholas' unreasonable anger at the rejection of his symphony—himself triumphantly saved the situation and snatched the evening from the bonds of awkwardness already tightening upon the guests, who knew that music in some form there must be, but had no idea of how to compass it.

The present musical idol of the hour was Glinka; and Ivan, whose piano practice had always been kept up, went quietly to the big Érard which stood lonesomely upon the platform at the end of the hall, opened it, seated himself, and dashed into the brilliant overture to "Russlan and Ludmilla": playing with such verve and spirit that, ere he finished, every man in the room had gone to augment the group around the instrument, and Ivan had his audience worked up to any pitch of appreciation.

Refusing every demand for an encore, Ivan rose, in the midst of a little babel of "*Bis!*" and, taking the *virtuoso* of the world by the arm, led him to the piano. Well repaid, it seemed, in that moment, for the disappointment he had lately had to endure. For every face about him was alive with friendliness and admiration for him and his tact.

Rubinstein played well, that night; for it was one of those rare occasions when he let himself go for his friends; and such technique and feeling as he could display will scarcely be known in the world again. When this was over, and nine-tenths of the company had gone, a chosen few made their way to Nicholas' apartment, where they sat down to a convivial little supper, at which, before them all—Kashkine, Balakirev, Laroche, Serov, Siloti,

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Darjomizky, and, lastly, Monsieur Gounod, who had not been present at the earlier festivities, Anton Rubinstein lifted his glass on high and proposed the health of his young friend Gregoriev, in terms before which Ivan would gladly have fled, had it not been for the shouts of approbation and affection that held him immovable, red-faced, choking, quite unable to reply.

Christmas, and the festivities of the new year, approached, proving to Ivan a time drearier than usual, in the face of his dying hope of an answer to the letter written, so long before, to his father, in the old house in the Serpoukhovskaia. One, faint, unfounded expectation, ridiculous though he felt it, Ivan had retained. As week succeeded week, he came to connect Christmas Day with a message, a note, a word, of some sort, from Prince Michael. Afterwards, looking back to his absolute faith in an event which he had no sort of reason to expect, it seemed as if some lost presentiment had found a mistaken home with him; for he actually spoke to Rubinstein of his visit to his father on that day, as a fact assured. Therefore, when, on Christmas morning, his fellow-lodgers, together with a gay little party of intimates, set off for the Slaviansky Bazaar, where they would literally spend the day at table, Ivan answered the friendly urging to join them by a resolute refusal. It was only when they had left the house, that Nicholas explained his protégé's reason for remaining behind; nor so much as hinted at his secret doubts, or the fact that he had left a cold luncheon spread on the kitchen-table, in case the mysterious Prince should not, after all, send for his son.

When he was left alone, Ivan installed himself at a window of the living-room, whence he could miss no one who should approach the house, either on foot or driving. He had, for company, the last of Gógòl's semi-tragic

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satires; and the first hour or two of his wait passed pleasantly; the unwonted silence in the rooms being a positive relief. After a time, however, his own thoughts began to intrude themselves violently upon the endless argument between Vassily Vassilyitch and the Staroste. So, turning reluctantly from the window, he set himself to work out some problems in his favorite card game, "yerolash": a Russian form of whist; which, despite constant practice, he continued to play very badly. For some time mathematical feats absorbed him. When, at last, he finished his third puzzle, Ivan Veliki was booming out the third quarter after twelve. Rather drearily, he lounged across to the piano. But to-day there was no music in the heart which, on the contrary, was growing, minute by minute, more heavy and more sad. Finally, thinking unhappily of the innumerable joyous feasts now beginning throughout the city—for late mass would be ended everywhere by now—he sat down alone to the cheerless meal which, poor though it was, but for Rubinstein he would not have had at all.

It was nine o'clock that night before the revellers, weary with overmuch cheer, returned. But the extra twinkle in Rubinstein's gay eyes, and the joyous grin on the flushed face of Laroche, disappeared when, lighting a candle to guide them through the darkened ante-chamber, they entered the living-room to find Ivan supine on the divan, sunk into a heavy slumber, the mottled white and red of his stained cheeks betraying a secret never afterwards referred to by his kindly discoverers. For Ivan's persistent faith had come to naught. Michael Gregoriev still denied his son.

The following week of holiday was long enough, and Ivan passed his days in complete, brooding idleness. But when, at last, on the noon of January 3, 1867, he returned to his classes at the Conservatoire, the young professor set to work with the air of one determined to kill

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every thought, every memory, of everything save the task of the hour; nor, henceforth, to give place to the slightest suggestion of regret or expectancy.

His fury of work lasted long. Day by day Nicholas Rubinstein watched for some sign of abatement: some lessening of the hours of labor: some little indulgence in the way of ordinary recreation. In vain. Ivan took barely time enough to satisfy his hunger: slept six or seven hours a night; and was at the piano alike when his companions appeared in the morning, and when they bade him good-night in the late evening. Not only did his hours for his own work increase, but he voluntarily added to his work at the Conservatoire, where he now remained from one until six, instead of till half-past four, as stipulated in his contract. And well did Nicholas understand that this was not done for extra money. Indeed Ivan had at first begged to relieve his chief of some of his younger pupils without remuneration of any kind: a suggestion which Nicholas was far too generous to permit. Instead, he remonstrated, earnestly, at Ivan's taking upon himself this extra amount of work; for, while teaching was his own forte, Ivan's nature, as he well knew, was capable of higher things. But by March such discussions had long since been dropped: and Rubinstein's whole anxiety now was to note in the youth the first signs of inevitable break-down, that his illness might be taken in time.

Only Ivan himself, of all their little group, was satisfied with his own condition. But none of the others knew how deep and how lasting had been the disappointment of his father's silence; or that this misfortune, coming on the heels of the rejection of his symphony, had thrown him into one of those protracted fits of depression, new now even to him, but which were to become familiar to and dreaded by all who cared for him. He kept himself in a constant state of exhaustion,

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mental and bodily, in order that sleep should be possible to his idle hours. At the same time, he was frequently under the Creator's exaltation: the deep delight of one who knows the quality of that which he is doing, and is, for the moment, satisfied therewith. And the climax of this ecstasy—than which there is nothing finer known to man—came when, on the evening of March 29th, he carried to his room, from the little parlor of the "Cucumber," one more finished manuscript—that of his tone-poem, "Day Dreams," which had been written, rewritten, added to, cut, polished and rounded off till its author knew that not a note, not a rest, not a mark of expression could be altered now by him. He knew also, in his secret soul, that this was good work—far the best, in fact, that he had ever done. For, for weeks and months, the theme had held possession of him, and he had put the best of himself into his subject. Indeed, hurt by the accusation, made in the rejection of his symphony, of hasty and careless writing, he had worked over his new piece as he was never to work upon anything again. Indeed its great fault in the eyes of its admirers to-day, the single one agreed upon by every critic that has ever understood and loved Gregoriev's work, is that this alone, of all his creations, is over-polished: faultily faultless.

That night, for many hours, Ivan sat at the desk in his room, poring over his beautifully written manuscript, gloating over it, glorying in the mere texture of the paper sheets; knowing well that they represented the best and the highest that lay within him; and that the expression was almost worthy of the conception. Next morning, still acting secretly, dreading, in his peculiar modesty, possible over-praise from those who might be prejudiced in his favor, he despatched his precious bundle to Petersburg, addressed to his old critics and masters, Zaremba and Anton Rubinstein. With it went

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a brief note requesting, humbly, that they examine it and send him their opinion of its worth. Then, with a long sigh, half of relief, half of sorrow that he had lost the companion of so many months, he settled down to put certain lazy, finishing touches to his overture, (already accepted by the Moscow orchestra); to sleep as he would; and dream, delightfully, as only the true artist can, of his forthcoming task: his opera, "The Boyar." And yet, despite the joys of resting his tired body and yet more tired mind, his contentment was not complete. For each succeeding day increased the restless impatience with which he awaited his letter from Petersburg.

At eight o'clock on the evening of April 7th Anton Rubinstein, in the living-room of his luxurious Petersburg suite, was sitting at his piano, where, spread out before him, were some sixty sheets of finely-written manuscript music:—a piano score. The master was playing from it, contemplatively, a swinging, swaying minor melody, interwoven with an intricate and rich accompaniment. He had reached a pause, betokening some change of *tempo* or key, when the portières were pushed noiselessly aside, and a servitor in livery appeared, announcing:

"The Herr Direktor!"

At once Zaremba, tall, angular, round-shouldered, his fluffy reddish hair and side whiskers looking thinner and fluffier than ever, entered, throwing the garments which he had refused the footman down upon one end of a long, Turkish divan.

Then the new-comer advanced, deliberately, to the piano, halted in the side angle of the instrument, and returned the long, white-faced stare with which Rubinstein greeted him. Finally the head of the Conservatoire uttered a dry:

"Well?"

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The *virtuoso* shook the long hair back from his face, cleared his throat, and murmured, hesitating, peculiarly, after each word: "The thing—has—several—good points."

"Points!" Zarembo croaked, scornfully. "Points!—It's a masterpiece!"

Anton Rubinstein sprang to his feet, oversetting the piano-chair in which he had been sitting. "Well—what if it is?"—pacing rapidly up and down.—"What if, by accident, it happens to be—remarkable? The fellow's a boy—a mere child—in his trustfulness!—And he's never done anything like this—before.—It 'll turn his head, completely—if he learns the—this opinion, of yours. Besides, he'll believe exactly what we tell him. And—and—"

"And he might suddenly turn *virtuoso*; in which case Monsieur Rubinstein—the *gr-r-reat* Monsieur Rubinstein—would, at all points, be rivalled!" finished Zarembo, with a dry, malicious grin.

Rubinstein stopped perfectly still, and maintained a quivering silence till the speech was concluded. But his two hands were clinched, so that the nails turned suddenly blue. Zarembo, seeing this, was about to make an explanation in a very different key, when Anton, in the harsh raucousness that serves one who is restraining violent profanity, almost whispered: "You will have the goodness, then, Monsieur Zarembo, either to send me, in the morning, reparation to the amount of—or stay! shall we, after all, publish those little letters from your friend the Lady of the Dyna—"

"Good God! Anton! Surely, surely I'm too useful to you!—Surely you understood my little joke, did you not?—Bah! This whiffet of a Gregoriev! Why, if his stuff contains anything of any value whatever, he has stolen it all from what he has seen of your unpublished works!—I—I—"

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Rubinstein burst into a peal of laughter; and yet, well as he understood all that this bald flattery stood for, it pleased him:—pleased him, coming from a man whom, years before, in a fit of unwonted generosity, he had saved from usury and blackmail: from one of those Jews who, then as now, infested Petersburg and terrorized men of standing from the very imperial family down. Anton had bought Zarembo's wretched debt, and the half-dozen innocent love-letters from a young girl who afterwards became an active Nihilist. And yet Anton Rubinstein, genius, jovial winner and diner, victim of the devils of envy and jealousy, had actually stooped, more than once, to threaten blackmail to the man whom he knew, in his heart, to have been guilty of nothing more than a week's unfortunate gambling, and an early attachment to a girl who had not returned his affection in kind!

Once more, as usual, the pianist won his point; but it took two hours before he would allow Zarembo, his remnant of a conscience once more deadened by the combined forces of Rubinstein's magnetism, covert threats, and golden wine, to leave.

The result of their talk bore immediate fruit. Late in the afternoon of the 11th, Ivan Gregoriev sat once more at his bedroom table, and very slowly, with white face and hands that shook, drew from his coat-pocket the letter which he had received at the post-office half an hour before, but had been unable to open on the way. Now, after a moment's fumbling, he cut the envelope, took out the effeminate sheet of note-paper, and began to read. Second by second his face changed. The letter was not long; yet before he reached the signature his face had twice flushed scarlet, and twice gone deadly pale.

It was a half-hour before his door was opened, after a dozen unanswered knocks, and the room invaded by

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Nicholas Rubinstein. He beheld his favorite thrown forward across a table, from which an overturned ink-stand dripped its contents, unnoticed, to the floor. The new-comer never paused for this; for his eyes had fallen on the letter, crushed in one of Ivan's out-stretched hands; and then he gazed upon the body which he perceived to quiver, from time to time, with half-conscious, reminiscent sobs.

CHAPTER XII

THE GODS ARRIVE

At this unprecedented spectacle Nicholas halted, abruptly, uttering some unintelligible exclamation. And Ivan, deep as he was buried beneath his weight of despair, heard the sound, and reluctantly raised himself, at the same time grasping the letter anew, till the intruder's attention was reattracted by the rustle.

"Aha!" said he, softly; laying a gentle hand on the young man's shoulder. "It is thy father that is gone?"

"Gone? My father? Where?" muttered Ivan, stupidly.

"You are in grief. Is it the death of some one near?"

Then, perceiving at last the drift of his friend's sympathy, Ivan burst into a harsh, unpleasant laugh. "Oh yes: it is a death. It is the death of a very ancient vanity of mine: a silly idea that I—that I—had a talent!"

Rubinstein's friendly face took on an expression of slow bewilderment, which began presently to soften into a concern whereat, once more, his companion uttered his mirthless laugh.

"Oh, I'm not mad, Nicholas Nikolaitch!—You remember my old symphony, and Litoritch's criticism when I sent it up to him?—Well, I was fool enough then not to understand: to go on believing that I—could write music!"

"Precisely as you can," returned the other, roughly.

Ivan's face quivered—and softened. "No. I will tell

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thee, my friend! Ten days ago I finished a symphonic poem: — a thing I've been working on for months. — I didn't dare play it to you. I wanted an opinion absolutely unbiassed; so I sent the manuscript to — to Zaremba and — your brother. Well, they gave me what I asked for.—Here's the letter!" and Ivan, stretching his white lips into a smile, tossed the crumpled paper to Rubinstein.

That burly man seated himself nearer the light, and began to read. As his eyes rapidly followed the familiar writing, his face grew crimson with slow, unwonted anger. His thick neck swelled. His lips were compressed, as if he feared to allow the words behind them to escape. But when he had reached the signature, he leaped to his feet and broke into one of those torrents of profanity which, rare as they were, unfailingly betokened some vigorous action to follow.

By the time Rubinstein's immediate rage was spent, Ivan had regained his own self-possession, save for the gnawing pain that was to lie at his heart throughout many a long week and month. Nicholas' mood, however, was far from calm. He knew, better than any one save his own brother, the extent of their protégé's magnificent talent. He had heard many a fragment of the tone-poem, during its long progress towards completion; and, unconsciously, he had judged it enough to understand the injustice of that petty and malicious letter; doubtful though he still was as to its immediate motive. True, Nicholas had too often suffered from his brother's tormenting jealousy to be by any means blind to Anton's fault. Yet it seemed a preposterous thing that a man with a reputation world-wide, built on the double foundation of creation and interpretation, should descend to the meanness of persecuting a mere boy: one whose foot was not yet firmly fixed on the second round of the great ladder upon which he himself

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towered so securely and so high!—And yet—had not this same belittling blemish been the bugbear of his own, generous existence? Was anything impossible in one whom he had known again and again to stoop to the pettiest forms of personal malice and vindictiveness.

The big-hearted brother could afford indulgence where only he himself was concerned. But this idea that his close comrades must be abused,—this was too much, indeed! The rejection of the symphony—anything but an amateurish piece of work—still rankled in him, almost as bitterly as in Ivan. And now this outrage—when any one could see that the boy was fairly starving for a word of the encouragement he had more than earned—ah! it was intolerable, at last!

In the following hour there passed much further conversation between the two; but Rubinstein, while professing every sympathy, never hinted at the idea that was taking shape in his mind. When he left the bedroom at last, Ivan felt that, in spite of himself, he should get some sleep; for Nicholas had assured him solemnly that, when "The Boyar" should be finished, and the libretto, to be provided by Ostrovsky, properly polished, he would himself arrange for its production during the ensuing winter season. And while Ivan stood, dazed and silent, wondering if such a thing could really be, this great-hearted friend of Russia and Russian art, had seized him by the hand, left a vigorous pound of encouragement on his shoulder, and was gone—shouting, anxiously, as he perceived the relative positions of the hands of his watch.

Next morning, before Ivan had risen from his protracted sleep, Rubinstein's pupils at the Conservatoire were undergoing three hours of remarkable instruction. Their burly master cursed them roundly when they failed to point out to him a given number of chords of the ninth and seventh, augmented or diminished, in a

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selected fugue of that mad iconoclast Bach; or to mark two dozen examples of canon and counterpoint in the first act of the latest opera by the staid pillar of classicism, Richard Wagner! After which betrayal of his mental state, the master leaped to his feet, jammed his ancient hat over his eyes, called out that his classes for the next three days were to take their instruction from Balakirev, Gregoriev or Laroche; and then, informing them only that he should return within the week, he rushed out of the building. A convenient droschky carried him to his apartment, where he gathered together a bagful of clothes, scribbled Ivan a fictitious explanation of his journey, and was soon on his way to the station, where, by a miracle, he caught the Petersburg express.

Two nights later, at half-past one o'clock, Anton the world-famed returned to his rooms from a supper which had followed one of his rare Petersburg recitals. He was in excellent humor; for his success, throughout both sections of the evening, had been precisely to his taste. Seven times had he been forced to encore, before the enraptured audience would leave the concert-hall; and at Count Lichtenstein's — the house of the German ambassador, he had been lionized till even he was satisfied. Wherefore was he in excellent humor before, entering his living-room, his eyes fell upon the unexpected figure of his brother, who stood silently awaiting him. Nor was Anton long in reading the significance of his visitor's expression, before which his own changed utterly. His eyes were dull, his mouth grimly straight as he asked, harshly:

"Well, what is it now?"

"You should gather from your conscience the reason for my highly uncomfortable journey," returned Nicholas, in the drawl which never failed to rouse his brother

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to fury. "It's your miserably selfish treatment of young Gregoriev and his work that's brought me up here so inconveniently."

Anton turned on his brother, his eyes blazing with swift rage. But Nicholas, with a single glance from his calm, mocking, but deeply penetrating eyes, once more arrested him. "This boy trusts you so, Anton, believes so utterly in your good faith, the impartial judgment of you and your worm, Zaremba, that even you, whose very blood is green, would be moved if you could hear him.—However—where's the manuscript of the boy's tone-poem?"

"*Tone-poem!*" — Eureka! — Do you imagine that it actually is music?—as he believes it, no doubt, to be? — Still, the rot is safe enough—where you'll not soon lay your hands on—"

The voice of the Jew was silenced—perforce; for the reason that hands were laid upon him: hands heavy and powerful, full of the righteous anger of a strong man driven beyond himself. And when the hero of the recent supper-party finally lay back in his own chair, panting and wriggling with pain, his mood had changed, perceptibly.

"Have you dared," demanded Nicholas, in a voice low and trembling, "to burn the first masterpiece of a genius?"

"I told you it was safe."

"Do you imagine I believe—Ah well! I take it back to Moscow with me, to-morrow."

At these words, the smouldering fire in the other's wretched heart leaped up again, and he cried, furiously: "You lie! It is *not* a masterpiece!—Even Zaremba said that every idea in it had been stolen from me!—The thing shall never be played until *I* choose!"

"Anton, are you mad?—Can you actually heed anything said to you by the jackal who endures your

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blackmail?—Has your infernal jealousy reached the point where you don't hesitate at *crime*?—My God!—My bro—”

“Good Heavens, Nicholas! Since when have you gone into melodrama?” The voice was pettish, but the listener was not slow to catch a tremor of discomfort under its attempted loftiness. “As if I cared!—or need to fear such stuff as Gregoriev’s!—Go to Zarembo, if you like, and tell him I sent you for the manuscript.—Much good may it do you! — Oh, yes, take the thing! Have it played! Hear the fools howl over it and praise it! The day of real greatness is over. Beethoven, and Bach and Mozart, and Rubinstein are to be superseded by the wonderful Wagner — who hasn’t a notion of music in his head! and Serov, the imitator; and now Gregoriev, infant prodigy, picked out of the gutter by me, from whom he now proceeds to steal the only ideas he has about composing!—And here I, a genius, have slaved all my life away to please a public who desert me in an hour for this—this—”

Wine and emotion, acting together, were making the man almost maudlin. Nicholas knew well what climax ten minutes would bring. So, with a word or two of friendly thanks and farewell, he left the house, and sought a familiar hotel, where he was too well known to be refused even at this ungodly hour.

In five days from the time of his departure Nicholas was back in Moscow, arriving there in the early evening, and proceeding at once to his rooms, where he found Ivan alone—Laroche being at the theatre, at the last performance for the season of Ostrovsky’s latest farce.

As he entered the room, Nicholas read the wistful question in Ivan’s eyes, and answered it by tossing him the roll of recovered manuscript, which, with a quivering cry of joy, Ivan caught to his breast and then re-

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tired, precipitately, to his room, whence he did not emerge again that night.

But, in spite of its successful recovery, and the high opinion afterwards expressed concerning it by Ivan's own circle, it was many years before "Day Dreams" had its initial performance: at a time when Russia was alive with the name of Gregoriev. Moreover, at that first performance the composer was not present. The work, result of so many hours of devoted labor, had been hateful to him from the evening on which he realized the enmity of his hitherto revered and beloved mentor. Though no word on the subject of Nicholas' visit to Petersburg ever passed between Ivan and his benefactor; though for years the semblance of friendship was retained by the young composer and the great *virtuoso*; three men knew well that Anton's influence over the younger man was gone, forever. And Anton himself was bitterly aware of the expression of half-puzzled, half-regretful disdain that he encountered so often in Ivan's eyes. Indeed both felt, in their secret souls, that no tone-poem ever written could be worth the price paid for this unhappy work:—which had, nevertheless, through Anton's very jealousy given Ivan the knowledge that he stood already more than one round above his fellows on the great ladder of attainment.

In one way, indeed, the young man had hardly needed this active proof of his ability; for, for some time now, there had been growing in him a quality much needed by his kind: a stern, dogged, ineradicable belief in himself and his eventual recognition. Rooted, as, to the shame of mankind, has been the lot of so many of the world's true great, in the deep bitterness of non-recognition; growing, sturdily, in the midst of beating storms and freezing snows of jealousy, malice, criticism incredibly stupid, misfortunes persistent and discouraging; such natures as these are bound at last to blossom, gloriously,

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in the sunlight of success; and live, nourished by the quiet dews of appreciation; unless, indeed, as in certain cases, the growth has been too delicate, too exquisite, too sensitive to outlive the probation years, and fades before it has come into maturity, while the bloom of full achievement is yet in the bud. But Ivan was not of these last. His stubbornness was great; and he labored on, doggedly, sore as was his heart, till June brought release from his labors at the Conservatoire. Then he betook himself and his few belongings joyously back to Vevey, where surroundings of natural beauty, rest, isolation, the absence of unwelcome tasks, gave him back his strength, and restored both his hope and his ambition.

During this period his great task was always "The Boyar." But, in the intervals between his stretches of regular work, he undertook certain lighter things, based on themes jotted down in his note-book at odd moments. It was, indeed, during this summer,—though Kashkine has erroneously attributed them to a later year, that he produced the celebrated "Songs of the Steppes," those "Chansons sans Paroles," which the world hums still, even after a vogue which would, in six months, have killed anything less original, less intangibly charming and uncommon. These finished—and the sheets of manuscript were printed, eighteen months later, almost without change—he caught a sudden fever of entomology: hunted daily for specimens, but preserved, eventually, only six of his captures: a moth, silver and green: a butterfly of steely, iridescent blue; a solemn, black-coated cricket; a bee bound round with the five golden rings of Italy; a tiny, rainbow-hued humming-bird, found dead in a fast-shut moon-flower; and, finally, a slender, bright-winged dragon-fly. These, humanely chloroformed and pasted upon cards, Ivan studied, wondering at his own interest; nor understood its reason till, by the dark and tortu-

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ous ways of unconscious cerebration, there sprang from his brain, Minerva-like, the six dances which are incorporated in the most charming ballet of his time the famous "Rêve d'Été." When, a year later, immediately before its first production, Monsieur Venara, *maître de ballet* of the Royal Opera, asked the composer for a special *pas* for his favorite *première danseuse*, Ivan meditated, and returned in spirit to the fields of Vevey, hunting for one more sprite of field or wood. In vain. He could think of nothing but an old familiar hedge of eglantine. And to that, finally, was written the "Rose Waltz" to which Mademoiselle Pakrovsky, Venara's "discovery," later danced her way through La Scala to Paris, that end and aim of the dancer's dreams. In September, the musical journal of Moscow announced the return of young Monsieur Gregoriev, a distant relative of the Prince Procureur-General of that name, who was winning no small reputation as a composer of light music, and who would resume his professorial duties at the Conservatoire. It was, moreover, rumored that the summer of Monsieur Gregoriev had been no idle one; but that, he having turned for the first time to a serious subject, Moscow would that winter have the opportunity of gauging the young man's talent at the Grand Theatre, when, in November, Signor Merelli's Italian troupe should begin their season of winter opera.

For once in a way, that the rule might be proved, the greater part of this bumptious paragraph was true. Furthermore, as had not been said, Ivan's name was to appear twice on the programme of the first orchestral concert of the season, over which the two Rubinsteins were now working busily. It had been by main force that Nicholas kept two spaces blank till the return of Ivan from his holiday. But Anton, who was in a dejected mood, made no great objection when Ivan, filled

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with a strange, new sensation of pride, wrote down the titles of two compositions under his name, on the manuscript programme handed to him, one evening, in his new abode.

For, this fall, Ivan had taken a long stride towards independence. In August Shrâdik had returned to Moscow, to remain throughout the winter. But young Laroche, whose family had lately lost a large fortune, was now in no position to leave the Rubinstein apartment, where his expenses were very light. Moreover, Wieniawski the pianist had rented the rooms on the fourth floor; and both he nor Shrâdik could be counted on to maintain a duet scales and exercises during the entire day. Wherefore poor Laroche began to seek the sympathetic stillness of the "Cucumber"; and Ivan, after two days in a temporary closet of six feet by eight, set out in search of an abode to fit his income.

This proved a matter less difficult than he had feared. In fact, within a week he was joyously settled, in a suite of two rooms, with an antechamber and a cubby for his servant, who was, indeed, none other than old Sóssha, a Gregoriev serf, who, on the day of the proclamation of freedom, more than five years before, had hurried forth from Konnaia Square as from the bottomless pit. For years he had led a wandering life, missing his former companions and comparatively easy existence, but too stubborn to return to a certain beating, and the plentiful curses of the Prince. When, then, he one day encountered Ivan issuing from a second contemplation of his new quarters, the old man rushed to him as towards a preserver Heaven-sent; and Ivan was but too glad to accept the charge.

Sóssha, always, like his generation, a slave at heart, would gladly have served his young master without wages and to the death. But Ivan, recently amazed by the announcement of a further increase in his salary,

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which now amounted to the princely sum of eighteen hundred roubles a year, offered his whilom servant wages so good that the fellow thenceforth actually refrained from any commission on the marketing and those other household purchases which Ivan was glad to leave to him.

Thus it came about that Monsieur Gregoriev was installed in a home of his own, in which to maintain his longed-for gods. Their ghosts appeared, in the company of Nicholas Rubinstein, on the night when this stanch friend came to tell Ivan that, instead of the brief *passacaglia* which he had modestly offered as his first piece on the concert programme, it had been decided—on a hearing entirely arranged by Nicholas, to make Monsieur Gregoriev the chief figure of the evening, by playing his first symphony—"Youth," as the *pièce de résistance* of the first half! Furthermore, he should still be represented in the second by the little "Sea Picture" already arranged for. Lastly,—and here, at last, Nicholas spoke with some faint hesitation, it was Anton's express wish to resign the conductor's baton, during the interpretation of the symphony, to the composer himself!

"But—but—good Heaven!" stammered Ivan, in a flutter of excitement and incredulity, "it is impossible! Conduct!—I cannot do it! It—it is impossible!"

The trouble in Rubinstein's mind now stepped forth to his face. "Could you not try, Ivan?—I want so much to see you and Anton quite reconciled. And he has suggested this, I think, to prove his friendship."

(Simple-hearted brother! Why could he not remember that Anton was as fully aware as himself of Ivan's inexperience in the art, seemingly so simple, really inordinately difficult, of leading an orchestra?)

Poor Ivan was as innocent in the matter as Nicholas himself, however: yes, more so. For, never having

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attempted it, he failed to realize the firmness, the decision, the executive ability required by him who would hold a large body of musicians in intelligent control. At this distance, the matter of conducting his symphony—the orchestration of which he knew by heart—seemed to hold out few difficulties. He considered, a little, in silence; and then proceeded to discuss the prospect with his visitor.

There were still four weeks before the concert. Work could be begun immediately. Certainly, during that time, working every day with the men who were to play his work, he could gain enough confidence, enough familiarity with the difficult points of this one, familiar composition, to carry him through the final event. So, at least, it seemed to the two who, in their eagerness, were leaving out of their calculation the most important factor in the case: Ivan's unconquerable shyness: his excessive modesty: the nervous self-consciousness never yet tried in so keen a way. But to-night Ivan was wrapped in a dream. A golden mist of hope gratified, ideals realized, ambition met, hid from him every ugly reality. Consent to Anton's wretched scheme was easily given; and then the conversation turned to a theme even more delightful: the forthcoming production of "The Boyar," to which, the concert over, all the energies of the composer must be turned.

Later that night Ivan, left alone, dazed and tremulous at the fortune now hovering within his grasp, laid upon the altar of his gods his first fruits of success.—Long, long after, when the chimera had become a form radiantly real, Ivan looked back upon this night as perhaps the happiest of his life. That it should be spent in solitude, seemed to him most natural. It would have been abnormal to him to seek companionship in an hour of exaltation: desecration to drown the pure delights of the intellect in the artificial ecstasy of alcohol. No,

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He sat quietly in his leathern chair, or paced rapidly about the room, occasionally seating himself at the piano and rippling off portions of the work that was to be judged at last by the dread tribunal, whose final verdict was not to be reversed: the supreme court of the general public.

To an on-looker, Ivan's behavior would have seemed commonplace enough. But he was moving through shadowy heavens, star-lit vaults, to which he had just attained, wherein he floated, the equal of those whom he had hitherto worshipped: an inhabitant of the kingdom of the gods, from whose height he could listen to the echo of his name, cried below by the earth-millions, repeated all around him, in tones of brotherhood, from the pale spirits of the surrounding great. And there Ivan knew that his songs were not of a day, not of a century, but for all time; but should stand as the perfect musical expression of the soul of the great, white, desolate country of his birth. Such his achievement, which, in this hour, he knew to be good. And so, as dawn dimmed the golden light of his lamps, Ivan, overcome with weariness, his exaltation fallen, the wine of his delight gone flat and stale, crept away to bed, passing into the transitional sleep whence he must wake to the noon-day light of the stolid, patient, working world.

Nicholas, having won Ivan's consent to his brother's plan, and sending his protégé the first summons to rehearse his numbers with the orchestra, put the affair into Anton's hands. But Ivan, ridiculously dreading criticism, and the exposure of his awkwardness in handling the unaccustomed baton, possessed also of the senseless idea that, on the final day, the thing must go of itself, "somehow,"—daily put off the matter of rehearsal. His excuses were endless and feeble; but they were all of them readily accepted by Anton, who was now conducting his rehearsals alone. It was actually

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within seven days of the concert before Nicholas, learning the real state of affairs, rushed off, in a frenzy, to his brother, to seek an explanation and voice a protest. But Anton's manner was baffling. He was gentle, courteous, and wonderfully sympathetic with Ivan for the occupations that had prevented him from appearing at rehearsal. He showed his brother a dozen of Ivan's hasty notes of excuse, as he said, soothingly:

"Come, Nikolai, come! What does it signify? Ivan Mikhailovitch is working very hard; and rehearsals are bothersome things. I shall smooth away the difficulties and have the orchestra perfectly familiar with his symphony—which, by-the-way, goes very well. And he will have his back to the audience, and may do what he likes. The orchestra will get through; for the concert-meister—Gruening, you know, can manage alone, perfectly.—Don't bother the young man. All will go well!"

Nicholas heard him out standing quite still, gnawing at his mustache ends, and staring, absent-mindedly, into a vague distance, that saw nothing of the expression of gentle inquiry that covered the nervousness in Anton. Yet Nicholas' sudden apprehension seemed, on reflection, to be unwarranted. Certainly, thought he, Anton's attitude towards Ivan had completely changed. Was he, at last, ashamed, and trying to obliterate the memory of his jealousy? Certainly so it would seem. And thus, when Nicholas presently left his brother, it was with the sincerest expressions of gratitude; though, more than once, during his return walk, there came to him an unsolicited doubt as to—to—what? The absolute openness of Anton's actions?—Scarcely that; and yet so much like that that no other explanation could be found to fit the quickly suppressed pang.

Pity, truly, that Nicholas could not have watched his brother for the fifteen minutes after his departure! During five of these, the great pianist stood where he

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had been left, staring down at the floor, an expression in his eyes compounded of many emotions. But presently his thoughts resolved themselves. For, throwing back his head, he gave a laugh: a laugh long, rather loud, but replete with anything in the world save mirth: suggesting strongly, indeed, the savageness of the frown which presently replaced it, when, drumming a scale upon the edge of the table in front of him, he muttered: "Conduct a symphony played by a full concert orchestra without a single rehearsal!—Good Heavens! Nicholas is turning into a fool!"

All things considered, there was certainly a grain of truth in Anton Rubinstein's assertion. Still, foolish as Nicholas may have shown himself over the matter, what was his unwisdom compared to that of Ivan, the proposed hero of the forthcoming inevitable *fiasco*? How to explain such behavior on the part of one who was, from the crown of his head to his toes, thoroughly a musician, a lover of all things musical, even Kashkine, intimate and blind adorer of Gregoriev as his biography of Ivan shows him to be, never discovered. Whether his native shyness simply put off an evil hour as long as possible: whether, full of the excitement of giving the final touches to his new work—a business which always, throughout his life, made Ivan oblivious of everything else,—rendered him really indifferent to the success of his symphony, or whether he really believed conducting to be merely a matter of waving a baton at each body of instruments as they entered or left the *ensemble*, the principal actor of this little drama never explained. Certainly, at the time, it did not occur to him to divine any purpose in the Herr Direktor's easy acceptance of the flimsy excuses that he sent to rehearsal after rehearsal. Suffice it to state that Ivan's first appearance in the greenroom of the Grand Theatre—scene of the much-discussed concert—was made at half-past seven

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o'clock on the evening of October 16th: forty-five minutes before the overture was announced to begin. Even now, he found himself the last to arrive of the little group who were either to take part, or had some professional interest in, the evening's performance. These greeted him jovially; but, after he had drunk the glass of sherry pressed upon him, he was drawn one side by two friends, Laroche and Nicholas Rubinstein, whose faces had sobered into undisguised anxiety. Rubinstein spoke first:

"Are you too nervous to glance through the first page or two of the score, here?" he demanded, his eyes taking quick review of Ivan's immaculate costume and rather pallid face.

Ivan's answering laugh caught Anton's ear. "Nervous!" he echoed. "I hadn't thought about it.—I know the thing by heart; still—where is the score?"

Laroche answered silently by holding out to him the thick, leather-bound sheets of the "Youth" symphony; at the same time pointing out to Ivan that, instead of third, he was to come second on the programme: Mademoiselle Pavario having demanded that she give her *aria* just before the intermission, for the sake of the probable encore.

Somehow, as Laroche quietly explained this fact, and Ivan, opening his familiar book, discovered for the first time certain blue-pencillings, made therein by Rubinstein during the rehearsals, to indicate those passages where some body of instruments were weak, or needed special watching, his heart began to throb, unsteadily. Second by second his desperate unfamiliarity with the whole thing, his utter ignorance of the tone and temper of the men he was to conduct—their respective abilities and faults—were revealing themselves to him. And, presently, he made for Anton, with a hoarse request that a few of the marks in the first movement, at least, be

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explained to him. Rubinstein was all courtesy, all geniality, all encouragement. But he overdid his part just enough to allow the first quick stab of doubt—or of understanding—to pierce the poor boy's rapidly crumbling barrier of confidence. When, at last, the director was called to his waiting audience, Ivan sat on, like a stone, his eyes riveted on the first page of the score,—which might have contained pictures of butterflies upon it for all he knew. His heart was palpitating like a woman's. His head was in a sick whirl. Then, in the horrid silence in which he sat, a voice from out of the far away addressed him:

“Herr Gregoriev, they are ready for you!”

Without a word, his face set, his eyes brilliant, he rose, mechanically, gave his score into the hands of the librarian, who, for ten minutes, had been nervously awaiting it, and then walked woodenly up the passage to the wings. Here somebody grasped his arm and held him for an instant, whispering something unintelligible into his ears. Some seconds, or minutes, or hours, after this, there struck into his eyes the white glare of the footlights. Then a thin sprinkling of applause rose to meet his slight, mechanical bow; and, at the same instant, he perceived, sitting in the right-hand stage-box in the first tier, the form of his father: his white face barred by the black line of his mustache; the frame of hair above, all iron gray streaked with white. Beyond this figure rose a dead wall of black and colored patch-work emphasized by featureless white splashes; the whole punctuated, here and there, with gleams of light betokening jewels.

The hand-clapping died away. Ivan turned, mounted his desk, and lifted the black baton. He rapped, once, and beheld sixty pairs of gleaming eyes raised to him: rapped twice, and saw thirty bows lifted in air. Then he glanced at the first, open page of his score.—It was

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simply a horrible, gray blur, from which not a note, not a mark, would detach itself.—And he wondered, frantically, how in the world his symphony began:—loudly or softly? with violins or with trumpets? The seconds that followed were the longest of his life. Then the concertmeister, sitting below, gave an audible murmur; and, together, the violins and the woodwinds began the first, long-drawn-out notes of the introduction.

Heavens! It had begun! He was in for it—hopelessly. Somehow or other these terrible men must be kept playing.—How? By whom? Again he looked at his score, and slowly turned a page. The sound of clarinets smote his ear. They were actually getting on, then.—Good! Out of the mists of his terror, there came, at last, an idea: the wild notion that here, now, came a quick *crescendo* and climax. With a wide sweep of his baton he suddenly broke in upon the orchestra and demanded the *tutti*. Gruening, violently tremoloing, swore, helplessly. The men stared. Wildly, once more, Ivan indicated full orchestra. So there came one, furious, discordant crash, as all the instruments, obeying, in their customary, hypnotic manner, the motion of their leader, came in, each with his first notes, no matter how far ahead of the present measure they might be. The noise was, truly, something hideous! The men themselves grew panic-stricken; and each group strove madly to bring their particular theme out of the general chaos; thereby increasing, tenfold, the frightful *charivari*.¹

From behind, from the vast audience which, till now, had maintained an amazed stillness, there began to sound little bursts of laughter—followed by a spluttering streak of hisses which were drowned in increasing shouts

¹This incident is not fictitious; but was an actual occurrence in the life of one of the most distinguished of Russian composers.

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of amusement. The thing was really too absurd for legitimate disapproval.

Ivan's heart stopped beating. In all his mind there remained but one thought: that Michael Gregoriev, his father, was a witness of this scene! Yet he felt the touch upon his arm: he was sensible of the kindly whisper in his ear. Docilely he followed Nicholas off the stage—away from this climactic *fiasco* of all his wretched series of failures. And Anton, watching the outcome of the scene he had planned with so much gusto, felt a sudden pang of intense pity, of remorse, of generosity, shoot through his shrivelled heart.

Two minutes later, the Herr Direktor was on the stage, apologizing earnestly for the sudden illness of young Monsieur Gregoriev, who had turned faint as the result of overwork. And then, turning to the demoralized orchestra, he restored them, by a word and a look, to their usual order, whence, three seconds later, rose again the first long, sweet strains of the first movement of the symphony, which, this time, was received by the audience with frigid politeness, and many inaudible comments on the shocking management that had admitted a drunken man to the stage before *them*—the cream of Moscow's society!

Moscow society, indeed; but also representatives from other walks of life. For, as his son retreated from the scene of his disgrace, the solitary occupant of the right-hand stage *loge*, wrapping himself, face and body, in a concealing cloak, walked rapidly towards the street, and had soon left far behind the Grand Theatre, and his last dream of reconciliation with his son.

Late in the afternoon of the following day, the directors of the Moscow Conservatoire of Music held a spontaneous meeting, which the presence of four men over a quorum rendered formal. It was for the purpose

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of deciding the question of obtaining a new junior-class professor of harmony. The matter was hotly debated: several speakers maintaining that, after the affair of the night before, it would be impossible for Monsieur Gregoriev to retain either the interest or the respect of his pupils. It was remarkable, however, that only one man—a person who had never met the person under discussion, referred to the prevalent rumor of intemperance.

The door to the directors' room remained shut for two, ominous hours. But when the inmates appeared again in the light of day, their general expression was cheerful; and the list of Conservatoire professors remained unchanged. Ivan was to be spared this final humiliation. For not only Nicholas, but Anton Rubinstein himself, fought gallantly for his retention. And it was undoubtedly the influence of the great *virtuoso* which turned the scale in his favor.—Moreover, it may be surmised, and by no means without justification, that, even had Ivan temporarily lost his position, the following winter would have seen it once more offered to him; though his acceptance might have proved a more doubtful matter. As it was, his gratitude towards the various members of the committee was as deep as it was silent.

Certainly, without this possible, additional unhappiness, Ivan's cup of misery was, for the moment, full. During the morning after the fateful concert many people—all of them cruel, many wantonly malicious, knocked at Ivan's door. Two only were admitted—neither of whom could come under the general category. One of these was Nicholas Rubinstein; the other Laroche. Probably, of all the world, only these two understood Ivan at this time. But their understanding and their love stood them in poor stead now. He whom they sought to comfort lay deep in a hell of his own, from the very threshold of which they were barred away. Later, through the hours of the meeting—which Ivan

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silently divined—Laroche remained alone with him. And Nicholas' return, with news of victory, in some measure lessened his agony of shame. But it was weeks before he was known to show his face outside of his own rooms or the Conservatoire; for he gave way, unresisting, to the morbidness always lying in wait for him. And all Rubinstein's upbraidings, all the eloquent logic of Laroche, could move him to nothing but the reiterated statement that, years before, at his court-martial, he had been conscious of no fault for which to lower his head; whereas this time—alas!—he had been guilty of many more than one: of laziness; of preposterous vanity; finally, worst of all, of that unpardonable cowardice and self-consciousness whereby he had lost his final hope of scraping through the ordeal—by means of his native wit and the experience and influence of the concertmeister Gruening.

In the end, Nicholas, — always, forever, this good Rubinstein, set to work to manufacture a bomb which should, in one instant, blow to fragments the walls of Ivan's self-constructed hermitage, and bring him forth again into the free light of heaven—and work. And this difficult task he did, as a matter of fact, accomplish. For it was on an evening in the latter half of November that he and Laroche entered Ivan's rooms at the customary hour, but with new light in their eyes. Waiting only till the fire was replenished and pipes drawing well, Nicholas observed, between puffs:

“Well, I've had my final talk with Merelli; and I have brought with me, for signing, the contracts covering the production, to be made on New Year's night, of your opera, “The Boyar.”

Ivan stiffened for an instant; then sank dully back, saying, without a whit of expression in his voice: “Don't tease me any further about old visions, Nikolai.—Even from you that comes hard.”

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Nicholas' reply was to draw from his pocket a thin roll of paper, which, separating into duplicate, printed sheets, each bearing at its end the spluttering signature of the *impresario*, he spread out on Ivan's knee.

As the young man, with changing, wondering, finally uplifted, expression, ran slowly through the document, Nicholas prevented any possible expression of obligation by a running fire of comment and explanation.

"Won your spurs, you see, Ivan!—Royalties not great; but there'll certainly be a thousand or two for you.—Give you a great push, now that you've done what we all have to go through before we get there.—I did it, you know, years ago, in Hamburg!—Simply stopped at the second movement of the Italian symphony and walked off the stage.—Knees shaking so I couldn't stand up.—Even Anton lost himself in the Leipsic Tönhalle, once, in the middle of his own *cadenza* to a Beethoven sonata:—had played it a hundred times, I suppose; tried it twice, and then fairly ran out of the room.—Laroche there, can't expect any real luck till he's done it too.—What form 'll you take it in, Grigory?—Hey?—Finished, Ivan?—Well, I'm convinced that it is as well as we can do for you the first time. So you'd better sign it now—using us for witnesses—and I'll carry 'em back to Merelli myself, to-morrow."

So Ivan, lips twitching, hands trembling very much, put a shaky signature in each space indicated below Merelli's sprawling Italian dashes, while Nicholas and little Laroche looked on with shining eyes.

Thereupon began the era of a new and difficult experience. Healthy as was the occupation, Ivan wished a hundred times in those ensuing weeks that he had been seized with an apoplexy before ever he had put his name to the contract that gave him into Merelli's hands.—As a matter of fact, the ordeal was one trying enough for nerveless men. But to Ivan it was simply a process of

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refined torture, in the course of which every one of his petted peculiarities of style, the most cherished of his situations, the choicest of his originalities, were ruthlessly cut, altered, or swept calmly away:—a perfectly correct and artistic proceeding, and agreeable to every one except the author.

No cutting of rehearsals now! In fact, for his reputation and the life of his suffering opera, Ivan dared not be away from the opera-house during a single hour of that hurried preparation. For, in those days, no composers had so little right in Russia as Russians: no music was so neglected, so criticised, so under-estimated in the land of snows as that produced by the great pioneers of the highest of the arts. And yet, in that same Russia, any nonsense whatever that came out of Italy, got immediate hearing and sickening praise. The opera-houses of every city were given over, during the season, to Italian troupes. And if these did occasionally consent to perform some native work, it was always on an "off" night, with third-rate members of the company, in cast-off, inappropriate costumes, surrounded by worn-out scenery, and accompanied by the "ballet" orchestra—which contained about half the regulation instruments.

Most of these humiliations, it soon appeared, were to fall to the lot of the unfortunate "Boyar."—Still, New Year's night usually promised a good-sized audience; and the chorus was actually to be put into newly designed costumes. But the singers had considered, long ago, that plans for the winter were finished. Therefore this was a preposterous time to begin rehearsals for a work entirely new. The prima-donna and the first tenor simply scouted the idea of applying themselves to learn new rôles—and in a *Russian* opera! Merelli must be out of his head to set about such a thing!—Ivan, it is true, might have been encouraged had he heard the

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opinion of his work expressed by Merelli to his refractory singers.—It was a masterpiece; the finest opera, be it Italian, French or Russian, of the decade! etc, etc.—And indeed, had the *impresario* not actually believed something of this sort, no pleadings of Rubinstein would ever have got it accepted at this time of year. But the parts as they were finally cast might well have discouraged a man more tranquil and more experienced than Ivan: who, moreover, would have regarded as insane the person telling him that, in his secret heart, more than one member of the troupe beside Merelli thought the opera under preparation far ahead of the usual run of saccharine Italian concoctions habitually raved over by the sentimental world of the time.

But alas! What wretchedness it was to listen, day by day, from his empty box, to the throaty warblings of Finocchi—whose pronunciation of Russian was as near Chinese or Hebrew as the Slavic tongue: to argue vainly with La Menschikov, the soprano, who, to Ivan's unbounded disgust, used every vocal trick invented by the melodramatic Italians, from a revolting *tremolo*, and a barefaced *falseto* to an incorrigible persistence in the *appoggiatura*, an affectation peculiarly unadapted to Ivan's rich, strong style. Many a concerted passage, moreover, did he, in silent despair, alter to suit the stubborn inabilities of the singers, who insisted that the composer knew nothing of the possibilities of the human voice:—a criticism, indeed, passed more than once on Ivan's later works, and by those who knew whereof they spoke. The climax came on a late December afternoon, when, after a three hours' struggle with a single passage, the contralto went into hysterics, the soprano flew into a rage that promised to keep her off the boards for a week, and Finocchi retired to his dressing-room vowing to resign his part. The cause of this united rebellion was the rhythm of a quartet in the third act—by far the best

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concerted piece in the opera—in which the two high voices sang four eighth notes against triplets in the base.

This passage had, up till now, been held in abeyance by Merelli, who had foreseen difficulty. And, now that it was reached, it proved a reef indeed. For, of the four singers, only the basso had any conception of time. Thus when Merelli, in despair, came apologetically to Ivan to suggest an alteration of the rhythm—which made the whole beauty of the song—Ivan rose from his place swearing, savagely, that not one other note in the score should be altered; but that Merelli and his whole troupe might go to perdition when and how they chose; after which he left the theatre, sought out Nicholas, flung his contract in that good man's face, and requested that he go at once to Merelli with word that the score be returned, with all its parts, and the entire transaction declared off.

Next morning, at ten o'clock, Ivan heard his quartet sung with a strictness of *tempo*, rhythm, and expression, far surpassing anything yet accomplished by any of the principals of the company.

By Christmas week, all Moscow knew that a Gregoriev opera, *The Boyar*—"written by the man who had been too drunk to conduct his symphony in the previous October, you know"—(as good an advertisement as any, and costing nothing)—was to be produced at the Grand Theatre, at eight o'clock on the evening of January 1, 1868; the evening's ballet, "*Rêve d'Été*" being by the same composer. Ivan's friends were in a state of high excitement at a prospective success of which Merelli seemed very sure. But they suddenly discovered that the composer himself had not the slightest intention of being present to hear his work. For three days they besieged Ivan with expostulation, incredulity, persuasion. All in vain. When, twenty minutes after the

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hour on the night named, the curtain rose, disclosing to the chorus a house packed to the doors, the composer's box—reserved for him—contained only the two Rubinsteins, Balakirev, Kashkine, and Laroche. Ostrovsky, the librettist, was behind the scenes, still on his knees before the Menschikov, in a mad endeavor to obtain her promise to abstain from the French habit of adding an *e* to the end of every word.

Ivan, deserted even by Sóssha, who had a seat in the topmost gallery of the opera-house, sat before his dying fire, enduring the last throes of that long struggle for recognition which, he believed in the depths of his soul, was finally to end, to-night. It is seldom, indeed, that there does not linger, however unwelcomed, one little shred of hope for the success of one's own work. But with Ivan there now remained not even this. The struggle of the past weeks, the glaring imperfections that had crowded yesterday's dress rehearsal, had brought him despair unutterable. Up to yesterday afternoon, all had been hopelessly wrong. And the last thing he had heard, on the previous day, as he fled the theatre, had been the loud echoes of the latest quarrel between Mesdames Menschikov and Castello, in which the former sat alternately reviling her companion and wailing that her voice, on the morrow, would be a mere hoarse shred. This Ivan did not doubt:—and the first important solo of the first act, whereby he had planned to capture and hold the interest of the audience, depended wholly upon her!—Moreover, Finocchi's costumes, finished barely in time for the dress-rehearsal, had been discovered to be hopeless anachronisms, which the ridiculous little man had violently refused to have altered in the least.—And the result of Merelli's last, special appeal, Ivan had not cared to learn.

These incidents, and many earlier ones of his long season of trial, whirled in a numbing chaos through

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Ivan's tired brain, wreathing themselves in malevolent phantasies about the undimmed picture of his bald failure at the concert, in the presence of his father. Indeed, unsuspected though it remained by any of his friends, it was really this fact of Prince Michael's witness of his misfortune—his second disgrace—which, through all these months, had been eating, like some poisonous acid, into the very vitals of Ivan's manhood, Ivan's courage. It was evident to him that his father, having somewhere beheld a programme of the concert, finding his son's name in famous company, had determined to give him one more chance of favor. He had come to hear the symphony: to find out whether, after all, the last Gregoriev were worth something. And—he had found out, indeed!

Thus, for the thousandth time, the unhappy man reviewed the history of the past three months. Minutes dragged themselves away. His thoughts grew less keen. The intense nervousness that had possessed him earlier, diminished. Little by little his pulses quieted, his temples ceased to throb. He sat wondering, vaguely, what new labor his hands must turn to, now that he had proved himself a fool in the profession he loved. His education might, possibly, be found of some account. There were such things as army coaches, he believed:—poor, broken-down creatures, living upon broken possibilities and the sale of their commissions. Then there recurred the memory of his old tutor, Ludmillo. He had not always been unhappy. His life had been dull enough, certainly; but there was nothing of this hideous notoriety in it. He—perhaps—

The great Kremlin clock sent twelve, slow strokes booming through the frosty air. Ivan started, suddenly. —By now, at least, the performance must be at an end! And—nobody had come to him!—They had all dreaded the breaking of the news. Even Sóssha:—Then it *had*

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failed! — Failed. — Ah, that spark of hope! Good Heavens! Had it actually existed, after all? Why else this terrible pain? this sickness? This conscious pallor?—Nonsense! Had he dreamed of anything else for one moment? He tried, desperately, for a shred of philosophy; and then found himself pacing the floor, knees trembling, heart in throat, that sense of nauseated faintness boding little good to a man seeking tranquillity. —Truly, it was in the ten ensuing minutes that the climax of his long, desperate struggle was reached, at last.

Hark! What hear we afar off? This pæan of trumpets? this rolling of chariot-wheels? No ghosts, tonight. Surely, this time, these are the gods themselves, that wait without this humble door!

At least the sound that smote Ivan's ears was real enough. A burly fist was pounding on the knocker. An instant's pause. Then—ah, then he flew, shakily, to open;—to be greeted by a volley of wreaths, of ribbons, more precious yet, of flowers—just single, spontaneous flowers, perfumed and wilted from their recent warm contact with human flesh, a spangle or a shred of lace still hanging to more than one audacious thorn!

Ivan, surrounded, heaped, by these tributes, deathly white and visibly shaking now, received the rush of a dozen men, and,—wonder of wonders, one woman! For presently, out of the mêlée of shaking hands and emotional bear-hugs, he found himself gazing into the velvet eyes of—Irina Petrovna, from whom, hopelessly dazed, he turned to the damp and shining face of Nicholas Rubinstein; (Anton, be it observed, not having come!)

“What are you doing?—What is it all?” he asked, wearily.

“What is it?—Oh, wonderful truly it is, that you've come at last to your own, Ivan! that Russia holds out her arms to you: that all Moscow is yours: that *The*

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Boyar is the opera of the century; and you are the man of—”

He stopped, perforce. Ivan's arms had risen, trembling. His lips had uttered one, slight cry. And then, without warning, he pitched forward, over the tumbled wreaths, into the waiting bosom of his gods.

CHAPTER XIII

STUDENT'S FOLLY

MORNING, with its usual mood of depressed calm, brought with it, for Ivan, a pessimistic disbelief in the reality of the recent midnight scene. Nevertheless he had curiosity enough remaining to cause him to hurry through his dressing and then run out to buy all the papers of the day. The result was that by the time Sósha appeared with the early samovar, Ivan was in the clouds again. Buoyancy had set every nerve to tingling; and the elation of the knowledge that success had actually come, quivered from him like a rosy aura.

Beyond doubt, "The Boyar" had at last opened to Ivan the long-locked door of recognition. No Russian opera, it seemed, "Russlan and Ludmilla" possibly excepted, had gone home to the hearts of the Russian people as had this piece of youthful work, which, though its merit was perfectly genuine, was by no means free from faults. At the opera-house itself, every one, from the Menschikov to Merelli and the chorus, was in a state of beaming delight. Already Madame Pervana and the august Limpadello himself had gone quietly to the Signor Impresario with the suggestion that possibly, after all, the parts of Marie Vassilievna and the Boyar were suited to their respective talents; and that it was a pity to allow Russian musical progress to be intrusted to such well-meaning but incompetent persons as the second soprano and tenor.

To the indignation of the prima-donna, however, the

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Menschikov, who, in the end, had risen to no small heights in her interpretation of the hapless Marie, was allowed to retain the rôle. But Ivan had the relief of seeing Finocchi of the hopeless ear replaced by Limpadello, through whom the quartet was now firmly united and became the sensation of the whole, sensational piece.

In the eight weeks of January and February, the opera was given eleven times. During the latter month the St. Petersburg company began to rehearse it; and at the end of March, on the Monday after Easter—one of the great nights of the year—Ivan and Ostrovsky sat together in a stage-box, watching the delight of one of the most magnificent audiences ever assembled in the Grand Theatre. The performance was as faultless as a performance can be made; and, as a final compliment to the composer, his own "nature ballet" was performed, with Mademoiselle Ellsler, who had come from Vienna for the purpose, in her already famous *pas seul* of the Butterfly. Before the last curtain descended, Ivan had been forced upon the stage beside his companion, to respond to the frantic plaudits of the men and women who, a few years before, had turned from Ivan Gregoriev as from one accursed.

After the opera there was still a long and hilarious supper, given by Merelli, to be endured; and when, an hour or two before dawn, Ivan finally reached his rooms, he found upon his table a sealed envelope, unaddressed. Opening it, there fell to the floor a packet of notes for two thousand roubles, together with a little slip of paper containing, in his father's writing, the words:

"You have deserved this; but I do not wish to see you."

The wish was obeyed. But the money, after some hesitation, Ivan spent.

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Final success after long and bitter waiting is apt to prey curiously on the human character. Ivan took his oddly enough. His intimate friends—the only people to whom hitherto he had showed common civility, became first amazed, then chagrined, finally infuriated, by his sudden change of front. By swift degrees he ceased his intimacy with them all: Laroche, Kashkine, Balakirev, nay, Nicholas himself. And by mid-April he found himself scarcely on speaking terms with one of them.

Angered, hurt as these men were, they naturally put Ivan's behavior down to a sudden turning of the head. One only of them all, and he, had they but known it, the most deeply hurt, failed to censure, and guessed at something like the truth: that the young man, suddenly weary of his long term of unceasing labor at his profession, was seeking temporary playmates from another sphere.

In this spring of 1868, Ivan was nearly eight-and-twenty years of age. In knowledge of the gray and ugly sides of life, he was twice as old. Only in experience of the frivolities of existence was he deficient, his education there having been cut off in its heyday. It was towards this, then, towards young companionship and youthful pleasures, that his heart turned with irresistible longing. His former associates and their dry discussions and pursuits, the round of petty rivalries, the continual life of the shop, tortured his nerves. Music itself, his great goddess, became unworshipful, wearying to his very soul. Thus, repudiating her in a night, he set forth in all the glory of a cleansed record and a full pocket, to hunt for pleasure. His Conservatoire classes he changed from afternoon to morning; and, though he taught abominably, Nicholas kept the dire red notice from him by doing much of his work over after him, that he might be free for once to laugh with the spring.

The quarter to which Ivan turned for his recreation

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would have surprised his comrades not a little; and young Laroche would curtly have denied the truth that he had been responsible for his colleague's type of amusement. Nevertheless it was he who had been responsible for bringing Irina Petrovna and her brother to Ivan's rooms on the night of the opera, inspired, rather maliciously, by some faint memory of the old court-martial proceedings, and the long intrigue deduced by every one between Ivan and the girl. That night, after Ivan's recovery from his fainting-fit, Irina's brother, Sergius, had, on request of the young composer, given Ivan the address in the student quarter where he and his sister were living. Old Petrov was dead. Irina had freed herself long ago from her Petersburg connections; and now she was keeping up two rooms on ten roubles a month, while her brother finished his medical course at the university.

On the morning after the opera, brother and sister discussed the vague possibility of Ivan's visiting them. Irina had no difficulty in hiding from Sergius just how much the hope meant to her; but there was no idea of concealing the same thing from herself. As the days passed and Ivan did not come, she grew almost frightened at her own disappointment, discovering only now, perhaps, that there could never be any other man in her life who could make her feel the extremes of emotion. In two weeks she had gone through every stage from eager expectation to apathy; and then, suddenly, during the last, vague flicker of dying hope—he came; and her life grew red again. She was even content that he should evince most interest in men—her brother and the fellow-students that thronged their rooms at all hours. Of these, one and all regarded the visitor as a great and wealthy personage; and yet none could long remain unfriendly before the gay simplicity which speedily made Ivan as one of them. By rapid degrees their intercourse

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became intimate; and Ivan believed that their minds, their dreams, their trials, were as open to him as his to them. If they were not, if their secret hopes and the all-powerful reason for their community spirit remained sedulously concealed, this was, in truth, still greater proof of their friendship for him; for there were few of the hated upper class that they would have scrupled to use in their own way for their own purposes.

It was odd, perhaps, that Ivan never perceived how often his entrance into their rooms stopped or turned the conversation; though perhaps much personal sacrifice had been made for that meeting. They had all come to be proud of the young composer's fondness for them; and they held a tacit agreement that he should never, through them, be placed in danger. For, though Ivan saw it not, the shadow of the rope, or of the distant, frozen, Siberian mines, hung over this little band of youths by day and by night, sleeping and waking. He had fallen upon the very centre of the first students' brotherhood: an alliance formed a few years before, during that unique revolution of Russian youth which resulted in the birth of Nihilism.

It was about the year 1860, when the question of abolition was shaking the Bear from head to tail, that this unique movement began. By some obscure trait of national heritage, there sprang up, almost at the same hour, through the mediæval gloom that still enveloped Peter's Empire, a thousand points of unwonted light. They were to be found burning at once in the twilight of isolated manors and the midnight of the serf's hut: in the city palace, and its neighboring tenement. Yet they sprang up among one class only—the young men and the young women of the race. The light was the light of intellectual desire for education, for science; and by it all Russia was presently set ablaze. In the history of mankind there is to be found no such tale of bloodless

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civil war as here. Young men and delicately nurtured girls were casting off every tradition of class, of custom, of convention, assuming the right to go forth freely to the universities, to study: willing, nay, glad, to renounce not only the luxuries but the comforts, almost the bare necessities of existence, they assumed the burden of dogged labor under almost unbearable poverty. Finally, bitterest of all, came the breaking of love-forged chains; the piteous, fruitless struggle of children to explain their position to their parents, members of that older generation who could not understand, who would not yield, who capped defeat by disinheritance.—Such were the battles of this war; such the sudden marvellous development of higher education in Russia.

Many were the virtues of this little army of youths and maidens. They worked together in perfect harmony of theory and practice. There was honor among the men; there was faith among the women. The wonderful history of Sonya Kovalevsky, delicate daughter of a noble house, who became the first woman to occupy a university professorship in Europe, was repeated a thousand times with humbler results. Nor have there failed to linger innumerable stories of those *mariages de facilité*—levers used simply to force the freedom of some too well-guarded aspirant for knowledge. And all of the young men married, in an hour, to girls whom they had never before seen, not ten, perhaps, failed in giving chivalrous protection, or ever took the possible, cruel advantage of this last, desperate ruse to escape the fettering guardianship of parentage.

But unhappily, though scandal scarcely raised its head among the sincere members of the youthful army, other ills as far-reaching and even more dangerous began soon to sow seeds of evil and of suffering among them. For out of the fermentation arising among these isolated bands, came the bitterest drink that Russia has had to

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swallow. Poverty, alienation, the common cause against a common enemy—how should it not breed socialism? That established, where find a lack of bolder spirits to take the short step into downright anarchy? Whether it was Turgenev or Lermontoff who first interpreted this infant Credo, what matters it? As in a night, lo! on every lip was the dread word that was destined to be blazoned in bloody letters at the head of the next and grimmest chapter of all Russian history: **NIHILISM**.

Indeed, indeed, had these young men and women found their little knowledge a deeply dangerous thing! Too quickly they perceived the imperfections of their government, the corruption rife among the officials of every class. And bitter was their reproach. The question to them seemed simple. To correct this, at once and forever, dig up the very soil in which the corruptive roots expanded—here was the way, the only way. And immediately there followed pamphlets and articles. Secret meetings, propagandist organizations, flooded the land. And the red flag was everywhere raised and acknowledged as the student symbol.

It was down upon the southern bank of the Moskva that the three or four thousand students of the Moscow University formed their colony, taking, as it were, communal possession of that narrow neighborhood. There Sergius and Irina dwelt, in circumstances a little better than those of their friends. They kept the rent of their rooms paid; and, moreover, it was a rare thing for a starving youth to drop in on them and find their samovar cold, or their welcome unready. Sergius was himself, indeed, the heart and soul of his branch of the brotherhood; and from him had emanated none knew how many screeds and pamphlets upon his favorite theme. Irina, relying on him as the last protector of her family, questioned none of his plans, but found in his manner of life much that delighted her Bohemian soul.

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Now, into their unstable existence, came Ivan; and over him brother and sister had their first dispute: Irina her first victory. True, Sergius knew, and was to know, nothing of his sister's past acquaintance with the composer, or what a debt he, as a brother, owed Ivan. In his eyes Gregoriev was simply a man of the world, unknown to the police, and, therefore, a valuable tool. After that first visit to their rooms, Sergius unfolded to Irina his purpose for the use of her evident admirer, which, to his utter amazement, the girl vehemently opposed. By what tortuous way she managed in the end to reach his deeply hidden scruples, who can say? Suffice it that, shortly, word went round to the effect that this one guest of the Quarter, though he was to be accorded privileges of comradeship, must remain a stranger to the inner significance of the prevalent red flag. Whereupon Irina, breathing freely, entered, for a few weeks, into the Kingdom.

The brief chapter of Ivan's life in the student quarter proceeded merrily to its dramatic close; and, until that close, Ivan remained utterly oblivious of his or the others' danger.

It was in the first week of the queen of months—the May-time, that Gregoriev took it into his head to return the oft-repeated, meagre hospitality of the Akheskaia, by giving a birthday supper to Sergius, on the night of the 10th. The idea had been born in him through some mention of the date by Irina, and a casual regret that their recent contribution towards Burevsky's new chemical outfit must preclude any hope of even the simplest celebration. Whether her speech had been ingenuous or not, it did not occur to Ivan to inquire, so pleased was he at thought of an opportunity of doing something for his new friends at last. Certainly Irina's finished suggestion accomplished its purpose to perfection; for, within three days, the affair was under way

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and the invitations accepted to a man—and one damsel.

It came as a surprise and an unpleasant one that news of this modest festivity should have gone abroad; but that the fact should be objected to, and that by persons unknown as well as known, was as annoying as it was preposterous. Four days before the affair, Ivan went through a highly unpleasant scene with old Nicholas Rubinstein, who came to beg him to give up his acquaintance in the Akheskaia, and remained to beseech, with an earnestness a trifle startling, that he would, at least, put off this supper. When finally his defeated friend had gone, though he had preserved towards him a courtesy that was as admirable as it had been cutting to old Nicholas, Ivan sat down to his piano feeling troubled at heart, uneasy in mind. Nor were either of these feelings lessened when, a quarter of an hour later, old Sóssha, after some unintelligible parley at the door with a being unknown, came limping in to his master bearing two notes—notes that bore no post-mark, but were both tightly sealed. The first was clear enough:

“Let Ivan Gregoriev go to the records in his father’s office and verify the day of Sergius Lihnoff’s birth.—November 19, 1844. Let him also see whether the story of the attempted murder of Guttenrog, at Kiev, in July 1861, is not to be found upon the same, or the next, page. Monsieur Gregoriev should be better acquainted with the guests whom he honors by his invitations.

“ONE WHO KNEW SOPHIA IVANOVNA.”

As his eyes traversed the last line, Ivan trembled a little, and grew suddenly faint. His mother’s name!—How long ago since he had heard it.—His mother!—His mother’s name used in a denunciation?—Faugh! It was a trap. Nevertheless he sat rigid, frowning, lost in thought, for many minutes before he lifted the other

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missive, addressed this time in a hand that seemed vaguely familiar.

"DEAR FRIEND,—You do too much for those who deserve nothing at your hands. Serge and I cannot repay you for your kindness; but we need not be too greatly indebted to you. It is my fault that you are to give this supper. It is I who ask you to give it up.—I implore you, Ivan Mikhailovitch, give it up; or, if it must be, change the date from Thursday to Sunday—and change it at the last minute. Also, if you pity me, do not show this to Serge, or to any one we know.

"Ivan, I wish to help you. Believe that, and accept the sincere compliments of

"IRINA PETROVNA."

Three times did Ivan read this curious note, meditating the while on the reason for the obvious fear in which it was written. Certainly the easiest way to discover her reason, was to talk to her alone. If he went down to the Quarter, could he manage a *tête-à-tête*?—If not, could he not take her for a walk—out for tea? Any of a hundred little ruses would serve him. Yes, he would go! And, springing up, he ran to his bedroom to dress.

Ten minutes later he opened the outer door of his apartment. As he stepped out upon the landing, he twisted his foot in a sudden effort to avoid stepping on a white envelope that had been pushed half-way under the door.

So there were more of them!

Laughing, a little sardonically, Ivan picked up the letter and turned back into his living-room again. The envelope of this missive, unlike the others, bore only his name, not the address. Within, it was undated, unsigned, and began abruptly:

"Monsieur Ivan Mikhailovitch Gregoriev, of whom, politically, the government as yet knows no wrong, is nevertheless respect-

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fully warned against further association with the students of the brotherhood in the Akheskaia. Let Monsieur Gregorïev assure himself of the character of his associates before proceeding with an intimacy which the government will be unable long to overlook.

“K. by order of M.—O. G. I.”

“M., Official Government Inspector!”—here, at last, was tangibility.—And yet—the seal? The great, red, double-eagle, so long familiar to him as dangling from the documents that were forever in the hands of his father:—where was it?—Besides, the whole thing was unofficial.—There was neither heading nor arms.—It was a hoax—a trick—possibly of Laroche, or Ostrovsky, or some other of that formal, jealous lot. They thought to drive him from his friendships by malicious, anonymous calumny, then? calumny of a body of poverty-stricken, half-starved men, working disinterestedly for the sake of science,—ah! That was a generous thing to do!—As for Irina’s letter, well, she had all a woman’s inconsistencies and whims. She had got some silly notion of pride in her now. By Heaven! He would not even go to see her. He would merely write a formal little note reminding her of the date and the hour of his supper—six o’clock on Thursday evening. And then, though all Russia, though the Czar himself forbade, he should give Sergius his festival, or go to prison before the day.

Punctually, then, at the hour named, on Thursday, May 10th, there sat down to the flower-strewn table in Ivan’s rooms seven persons—six men and one woman, they being all but one of the company asked. The chair between Sergius and Féodor Lemsky was to have been occupied by Yevgeny Burevsky, the young man who had been the recipient of those “scientific instruments” for which the whole Quarter was still out of ready money.

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It was Sergius himself who explained to their host that, ever since he had received his outfit, Burevsky had been tirelessly working at his chemistry. Thus, that afternoon, when his friends called for him on their way to Ivan, they had found him just nearing the end of a long and difficult experiment which could not be left. It should, he said, be finished between half-past six and seven, upon which he would hasten into his clothes and take a droschky at once for the house of his host. If anything went wrong, however, he sent his sincere regrets and apologies to Ivan, begging him to excuse an unpolished workman for his seeming rudeness, and sending a thousand thanks for the kindness of the invitation.

Sergius gave the excuse so pleasantly, in a manner so engagingly frank, that Ivan readily accepted it, nor noticed how fixedly Irina was staring down into her plate, while the four other young men sat in moody silence, their faces—this their host did perceive—looking singularly pallid and drawn.

Calling out for more candles and champagne—which were brought by two footmen, hired, for the occasion, to serve the dishes which old Sóssha and the neighboring pastry-shop between them had concocted,—Ivan, seconded by Sergius, who was in high spirits, set himself to bring life to his party. He found this unexpectedly easy. In fact, after a minute or two, one might almost have said that the hilarity became a little too boisterous, that the laughter almost bordered on the hysterical, that the humor seemed rather blurred for this stage of the evening. Then, *presto!* the room was in a nervous hush, while Irina lifted a quivering glass to the candle-light, and, in a voice not her own, proposed a toast:—The complete success of Yevgeny Burevsky's experiment, and—and his speedy appearance among his waiting friends.

Ivan heard a breath, indrawn, run round the table like

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a hiss, and he turned his eyes rather sharply on the girl as Sergius cried out:

"Come, are you all asleep?—Bottoms up—to Yevgeny's—success! May it fulfil his highest hopes—and—ours!"

"Thank you, your wish is answered," came a voice from the doorway.

Irina gave a hoarse scream, and her glass, with its untouched contents, dropped upon the table. Every man had started from his seat; but only Ivan went forward, hands out-stretched, to greet the young fellow who now came into the circle of light. He was carefully dressed, his blue coat buttoned tightly below a well-laundered shirt, a crush hat held in his hand, one lock of jet-black hair fallen over a forehead no more bloodless than his lips, while out of his ghastly face gleamed a pair of gray-green eyes that shone with a fixed brilliancy. One look at him, and Ivan was exclaiming, anxiously:

"Yevgeny Alexandrovitch, —you're ill! My God, man, you should be in bed!—come, sit down!"

But Burevsky laughed —hoarsely. "No, no. You will give me the best medicine: a meal—company—a glass of wine. I've—I've been working!—Sergius told you—?"

He broke off, waving a listless hand towards his friend. Ivan, touched with pity, asked no more questions but led him to the table and seated him; nor heeded, as he sent a servant for *vodka*, Burevsky's quick glance round the board, and his low-voiced "All well."

A moment later, and the room was echoing to the rattle of knives and forks and a conversation which, though lighter than before, was still fitful and rather feverish in its rapid change of topic. It was the talk of men keyed to an unbearable state of anticipation. Sergius presently called Irina to sing Marie's song of the stirrup-cup from "The Boyar"; and fourteen hands

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applauded wildly as she smilingly climbed upon her chair, and, holding the replenished glass in her right hand, began one of the most successful solos in Ivan's opera.

She sang unaccompanied; but accompaniment was not missed. Save for her voice, the room was absolutely still. Even Yevgeny, who had finished his *zakouski* and liqueur, pushed his broth away to listen undisturbed; and the footmen, with a change of plates, stole about the room on tiptoe. Irina's voice, nearing the climax of the solo, soared higher and fuller; while Ivan, with sparkling eyes, awaited the moment when he should lead the others into the rousing chorus that terminated the song. At that moment there came a sudden trampling of heavy feet on the stairs without, followed by a loud knock at the door, which, speedily thrown open by Sóssha, disclosed an officer and three gendarmes who, following the sound of the singing, presently halted on the dining-room threshold, evidently surprised at the scene before them.

Irina's voice broke off on an upper note, but she remained on her chair, petrified by some powerful emotion that singularly resembled terror. Her brother and his friends were, less conspicuously, in the same state. But Ivan proved himself admirable. Rising, quietly, he went forward, and asked, in a voice of mingled surprise and dignity:

"Who are you, may I ask? and what can your errand be with me or with my guests?"

The sergeant, after another long look around the room, consulted a paper in his hand and asked, slowly:

"You are Monsieur Ivan Gregoriev?"

"I am."

"There are others here?"

"You see them."

"These are all, then?"

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"I have two hired waiters and my own old servant in the kitchen."

"It's not them we want.—What are the names of these persons?"

"What right have you to ask? This house—"

"I am an officer in the service of the Czar. If you refuse to answer me I must take you forcibly before the court.—Give me the names of these men."

Ivan turned a piteous face towards his friends, and, in an instant, Sergius said, quietly: "Certainly give our names, Ivan. There is no reason for withholding them." Nor did either Ivan or the officer perceive that this young man was holding Irina, now lying back in her seat, from unconsciousness simply by the power of his eyes, or that he had grasped Burevsky's hand under the cloth and was keeping him from self-betrayal by the pure force of contact.

Meantime the officer was writing the names, occupations, and domiciles, of every one present, at Ivan's dictation; and, as each was given, he looked it out from a list in his small, black note-book, and checked it off. This over, he resumed his general questions:

"At what hour did these students arrive in your rooms?"

"I am not certain.—A few minutes—perhaps fifteen—before six."

"*Before* the hour?"

"Oh yes. We had to wait for Ivan Veliki to stop striking as I was calling out an order to my servant."

"Are you sure that they were all here then?"

Only now, for the first time, a thought that was like a dagger-thrust shot through Ivan. He wondered if the officer saw the color leave his face. Nevertheless his hesitation had been imperceptible when he said, quietly: "They all came in together."

The sergeant turned to his men and shook his head

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slightly. A few muttered words passed between them, the men seeming to agree with their superior. Then the officer once more faced Ivan, who stood waiting: "Thank you, sir. You have saved your friends from suspicion. Nevertheless I was forced to ask, because the entire Quarter is being searched for the man who, at twelve minutes past six to -night, shot and instantly killed Major Ternoff, assistant secretary of police, as he was driving, in his open droschky, through the Pretchishlensky Boulevard, from the public offices of justice towards his home." And, with a stiff salute, the sergeant, followed by his three men, turned and left the room and the apartment.

Mechanically Ivan closed the door upon them, and then stood staring from the white-faced Sergius to Irina, now supported by a neighbor, who was wetting her face with water from a goblet.

Presently, as if his thoughts had broken unconsciously into words, Ivan muttered, in a low, expressionless voice: "Anarchy!—Murder!—Good God—why didn't they make it my father?"

Then Burevsky rose slowly to his feet. "We all rejoice, Ivan, for and with you, that it was not your father.—And you have saved me—from—from a serious difficulty. If you had told them that I—that I did not come with the others—"

Ivan gave the spectre of a laugh. "Your chemistry should have served you, Yevgeny Alexandrovitch. Still—the lie—probably prevented—annoyance—to you all. Ah, these Nihilists! What remarkable fellows they—"

"Ivan, we will go now. Irina is recovering," interrupted Sergius, gravely. To Ivan's dull surprise, the young fellow's eyes met his full and honestly. Involuntarily Ivan shuddered; but a little of the convulsive bitterness in his heart faded away. Nevertheless, he took a curious advantage of the situation. Far from

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permitting the now restlessly eager students to leave his rooms, he kept them there, and, with them, the miserable Irina, till past midnight. Uncomfortable, shame-stricken, afraid, as they were, they continued to sit at the table of the man they had used, and to eat his food and drink his wine. Only once Sergius ventured to turn to him, saying: "You do not eat.—This *vol-au-vent* is perfect."

But Ivan, turning his grave, black eyes on those of the speaker, made answer:

"Pietr Ternoff was my mother's second cousin. He has dandled me on his knee when I was a baby. Till I was too old for it, I drank my milk out of the gold mug he sent me at my birth.—And Pietr Ternoff has been murdered.—Am I to break bread—with you—to-night?"

CHAPTER XIV

THE THIRD SECTION

It was a quarter to one o'clock before Ivan finally shut the door upon his guests—the hand of none of whom had he touched in farewell. And they, as they went out into the May night, knew that they had left their friendship behind forever; but only one of them would let a little heavy-heartedness melt away in tears. Irina, hanging on her brother's arm, wept, quietly, all the way back to the Alkheskaia.

In spite of all their genuine regret, however, there was not one of them who carried Ivan's bitterness to bed with him that night. They believed in the righteousness of their act. He saw it as it was: cowardly and cold-blooded murder. Here, then, was a little more faith lost; one more tradition gone; another shred of his remnant of faith in humanity torn from him and flung into the mud. During the whole of the following week he carried his load silently about with him. The papers were filled with the story of the assassination, the details of the public funeral, the condition of his widow, and the incomprehensible escape and continued liberty of the assassin. It had been still light when the man—all were agreed that it had been a man,—halted in the shadow of a doorway till his victim's vehicle was in the road opposite him. Then he had shot the fatal bullet, stepped calmly out of the doorway, and, mingling with the quickly gathering crowd, passed at once from the sight of the one or two who *believed* they had seen him

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shoot. And now he had disappeared into the wilderness of the city. Though a reward of three thousand roubles was offered for his capture, none had, as yet, brought so much as a clew.

Ivan spent the week absorbing these reiterated facts, and trying, vaguely, to resolve them into some sort of order: to come to some sort of decision regarding his own course of action. Certain he was that he knew where to lay hands upon Ternoff's assassin. Certain also was he that, if he gave Burevsky up to justice—his father's "justice," the responsibility of Burevsky's execution or exile would be on his conscience forevermore.

What to do?

Burevsky and his companions had used him ruthlessly, as their shield.—Ivan had no idea of how slight had been the advantage they took in comparison with predecessors of his.—Why should he hesitate to visit them with *his* ideas of right?—But, though he came forever to this point he always left it again, unanswered, and went reluctantly back to the beginning of his syllogism. The men had been his friends. He had liked them more than he had known. He had broken their bread. Could he deliver them up to their fearful retribution?—God help him, he could not: criminals, menacing society, though they were.

It took Ivan an entire week to come to the simple and obvious decision of a middle course, so harassed and over-excited had his brain become. But when, on the morning of May 17th, it suddenly occurred to him to go to Sergius and make a clean breast of his doubt and his self-reproach, he could hardly constrain himself to wait till his classes were over and a mouthful of luncheon swallowed before he betook himself, in a swift droschky along the bank of the river, till he came to the bridge across which lay the Student Quarter. Thence he proceeded, on foot, through the maze of ugly little streets,

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wherein the spring sunshine only showed up all the more pitilessly their meanness, and filth, and ugliness. Once at the house in which the brother and sister lodged, he went up the rickety stairs unheeding any of the customary sights and sounds, till, arriving at Sergius' door, he started a little to find it wide open. Five minutes later he returned to that door in a state of yet greater bewilderment; for both rooms were empty of occupants.

Sergius and Irina were gone; but, as their belongings were scattered about in the usual untidiness, Ivan argued return. Throwing off his hat, then, he filled and lighted a pipe, seated himself at the battered piano—sole remaining relic of old Petrov Lihnoff, and now too dilapidated for sale—and yielded himself for an hour to that most dangerous luxury of the serious composer: improvisation.

Interested in the little theme he had developed, Ivan lost count of time, and nearly two hours passed before he was interrupted. There was a sound of feet running rapidly up-stairs, and then there burst into the room Burevsky: bare-headed, leaden-hued, eyes aflame, his left hand hanging, crushed and bloody, at his side, in his right a pistol, its barrel glinting in the light.

Ivan was on his feet, facing the other, who stared at him as he gasped, between his quick breaths:

"*You*, Gregoriev!—*You*!—Go, instantly!—Leave the house at the back;—there may be time!—*You*—"

"But for God's sake, Burevsky, what's the matter?—Where are Sergius and Irina?"

"Irina got away, thank God!—We managed that, last night.—See here, Ivan, she's at—"

The next word was drowned in the sharp report of a pistol-shot, which was instantly followed by another. Afterwards came a wild rush on the stairs, a low, hoarse cry, the screams of some women in the lower rooms, and then the room was invaded by Tronsky and Stassov, who

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were followed by Sergius and Féodor Lemsky dragging between them Lemsky's brother, Boris. Him they laid at once upon a sofa, dripping as he was with the blood which still gushed from a wound under his heart. He was murmuring, incoherently. Perhaps he was conscious of receiving his brother's kiss. But it was his last mortal impression. Immediately afterwards his jaw fell, his eyes stared wide. One of them, at least, would not see Siberia.

And now, without a word, the five—Lemsky, stunned and silent, with them, began hurriedly to pile furniture before the closed and bolted door. Ivan, still standing motionless by the window, transfixed with horror, watched, as piano, table, chairs, finally a bed, were built into a barricade. Already, however, their movements were accompanied by the sound of voices and the trampling of feet in the hall outside. Ivan realized that the combat was about to recommence; and he was moving vaguely towards the group of students when Sergius seized him by the shoulder and drew him across to the door of the other room. As they went he sketched, in three or four vivid sentences the events following the shooting of Ternoff: the finding of the pistol-dealer, who had put the police upon the assassin's track; Burevsky's fugitive week; Irina's escape; the sudden discovery of the arrangements for Burevsky's departure an hour ago; then the return flight from the station to their own quarter, ending in this final stand. Now they were in the back room, and Ivan listened, dully, while Sergius explained that he might escape even yet, by means of the rear window and a rope, which he drew from behind the porcelain stove and put into Ivan's hands. Then came one word of regret and farewell. The door was slammed upon him and he heard the bolt upon the other side shot home.

Instantly Ivan, roused too late, sprang after his friend

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and began beating furiously upon the door, calling to be admitted. In vain. His words were completely drowned in the furious clamor now rising from the hall beyond. Shot after shot rang out, punctuating sharply the fierce, steady pounding at the barricade, and the low, dull, but intensely penetrating murmur of the crowd gathering about the house in street and alley. Once again, listening, calculating possibilities, Ivan stood motionless, horror in his eyes, chaos in his brain. How long the fight beyond him endured he had no idea. Very suddenly, however, the clamor ceased, and, out of the silence, rose the tones of a deep, official voice, repeating the formal sentences of accusation and arrest. These were given but three times; and the names were those of Lihnoff, Stassov, and Féodor Lemsky. In his heart Ivan realized at once the reason for this; but the pangs of grief in him came as no surprise. What he now did seemed natural to him. To the prisoners in the outer room it was wanton madness. They, and the policemen who were still working upon the ruins of the barricade, heard the sound of sharp rapping on the inner door. An officer, uttering an exclamation, ran to it and unfastened the bolt: The next instant Ivan walked quietly into the wrecked room, and gazed about him at the ruin, where, in the midst of splinters and scraps of wood, empty cartridges, and greasy blood-streaks, lay three bodies: Lemsky, the first sacrifice; Burevsky the assassin; and Vladimir Tronsky, a gentle, beardless boy. Empty window-frames, splintered glass, and the ends of two ladders on the sills, showed how an entrance had finally been effected; for old Petrov's piano, now a mass of splintered wood and twisted wire, had served its owner to the last.

There was some manifestation of surprise at Ivan's appearance; but he was at once seized, handcuffed, and provided likewise with ankle-chains, which permitted

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of a step of about eight inches. Then he was ranged beside the other three, who noticed him in no way. And, though he knew that the lack of recognition was for his own safety, it hurt, unaccountably. The anger, the repulsion for these youths, was gone from him now; and at heart he sided fanatically with them against their captors. But it had not as yet occurred to him that his own plight was far from pleasant.

There was an interminable, official wait. Little by little the crowd outside was broken up by police, who feared a possible attempt to liberate the prisoners when they should emerge. The golden light of the May afternoon was fading softly into the silvery white night of the north. A chill had crept into the air. Inward discomfort began to remind Ivan that a day had passed since he had eaten substantially; for at noon he had been too full of the prospective interview to linger over luncheon. But there was small hope of speedy refreshment now; and the hunger of prisoners is traditional.

By degrees, however, he drifted into one of his customary reveries, which was hardly broken by the termination of their wait. Under a guard of flattering size, the "politicals" were escorted down the silent, empty stairs and into the street, where two ordinary carriages awaited them. On emerging from the smoke-filled, blood-spattered house into the clean, cold evening air, Sergius looked keenly about him for some sign of deliverance or of sympathy. None came. The street was like that of an abandoned city. On penalty of fine, every inhabitant was within doors. One moment, and the world was shut away from the prisoners, perhaps for the rest of their lives. The four of them were divided and placed two in a carriage, facing two guards who sat with loaded pistols on their knees: on the box an armed driver and a sergeant of police. The windows were closely curtained, and, during the long drive, not one glimpse was

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to be caught of street or building. Nevertheless, Ivan knew that they had not crossed the river. That meant that they were not at once to go to the "politicals" prison nor to the formal offices of the police. But one house in this part of the town seemed likely to be their destination. That was the gubernatorial palace: surely an unusual destination, Ivan thought, even considering the crime for which they were to suffer.

It was as they were finally alighting from the vehicle that Ivan's companion, Stassov, managed at last to speak, in a whisper so rapid and so low that Ivan barely caught it:

"We get our trial now. This examination will be all we'll have.—Be careful."

Then, for the first time, Ivan's heart sank, terribly. Another instant, and it was in his throat. Their destination had not been the palace of the Governor; but that of the chief of the Moscow Third Section. Ivan was entering his boyhood home!

An hour had passed. Ivan, Sergius, and four guards were sitting silently in the antechamber to Prince Michael's inner room. They alone were left; for, Stassov first, then Lemsky, had been led away into that dreaded chamber, and had not returned. Of what passed at their examinations, Ivan could only guess. But his imagination being now on fire, he felt that the crossing of that threshold would be little less awful than that of a doomed heretic into the torture-chamber of the Spanish Inquisition. Of the memories, realizations, and foreboding of those sixty minutes, it is difficult to speak, clearly. From the stunned calm of the first moment of shock, Ivan had drifted gradually into a fever of acutest feeling. To him, now, his situation assumed monstrous and distorted proportions; for he expected no jot or tittle of favor from the father who had cast him

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so completely out of his life. Moreover, back of all the melodrama of the present, lay a black shadow of haunting memory: memory of the house in which he sat; of his impressionable, childish days within it; of Nathalie; of Ludmillo; finally, above all, her image enveloped in a shining aura of passionate appreciation, his mother: of the sorrow of her tender life; and the poignant bitterness of her death. It was to this tapestry of the past that he added now his vivid mental pictures of present events; the revelations concerning the character of his new friends; of Irina, her treachery and her remorse; and finally, incongruity that made the fantasy perfect, over all, through all, there wound, caressingly, the notes of the little melody that had that afternoon flowed from his fingers on to Sergius' battered piano:—the melody which now forms the principal theme of the weirdest of his tone poems; the "Saturnalia of the Red Death," taken from Poe's wild tale.

At length, while he sat drearily working his numbed fingers, Piotr entered for the third time and summoned Sergius, away into the inner room. Before he went, Irina's brother turned his face to his companion and looked at him; and in that look Ivan read all that the student had tried to express in it: his remorse, his anguish, his sorrow for the treachery that had ruined his friend. It was strange how, by that look, the hearts of both were lightened.

Ivan waited long alone, under the curious eyes of the guard who saw in him a type very different from that of the usual "political." Even these men, uneducated as they were, believed, in their hearts, that there was a mistake somewhere about this fellow. And yet, as for his chances of release with the great Chief within there—bah! They were not worth the price of a rusty nail.

In the end it was with an air dogged, half-sullen, half-resentful, that Ivan, concealing his face by keeping his

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head bent down, followed his father's old servitor along the short passage to the closed door of Prince Michael's cabinet. Immediately there came a word of command from within. The door was opened, and Ivan was pushed into the room.

It contained only one man, seated at a great work-table covered with orderly piles of documents. At first sight, the years seemed to have passed over Michael's head leaving him untouched; but, as Ivan stepped into the light of a low-hanging lamp, his father gave a sudden start, a hoarse gasp, and then fell back into his chair again—an old man. Ivan, though he had been gripping himself for the ordeal, felt himself turn slowly white, closed his eyes for an instant, and reopened them to meet the diamond-bright glare of his father's look. At that, moved by a combination of emotional strain, physical exhaustion, and nervous tension, he suddenly began to laugh. It was his father who brought him back to himself again: his father, who sat slowly rubbing one hand across his brows, and muttering, as one in a daze:

"Toi!—Toi, Ivan!—Dieu! Dieu!"

Words, tone, appearance, moved the son intensely; for never before had man beheld Michael Gregoriev show such stress of emotion. Never had any hour so clearly revealed the ravages of mad living and secret unhappiness.

True, the fierce eyes could flash as of old; the voice would presently once more ring harsh and servant and equal alike would cringe before him; for still he held half Moscow in the iron grip of his terrible omniscience. But Ivan noted the color of his hair—that dead white that is not the snow of years but the ashen colorlessness borne of continuous nervous strain. And there was the unexpected stoop of the powerful shoulders, the occasional unavoidable trembling of the hands, and in his

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face, which repeated the livid tone of the hair, were graven lines, many and deep, born of the repressed disappointment and increasing loneliness that had insensibly humanized the harsh visage. To the eyes of the son, looking on his father for the first time in years, there lay on face and figure, everywhere, the marks of that dread instrument which no member of the Third Section can put away or destroy: the evidences of relentless *experience*.

Eye to eye they faced each other, father and son. One minute passed.—Two.—Three. Never before had Ivan felt himself a thing of evil. But under those terrible eyes, that had searched hearts as others searched printed texts for interlinear meanings, he began to feel himself drawn into the wild waters between a Scylla of shame and a Charybdis of terror. Alas! Would this man believe his wretched tale of the trickery of others; of wanton, stubborn stupidity on the part of himself?

The first, hot wave of mortification had not passed when Prince Michael suddenly straightened, and lifted his head. His two hands were fast clinched; but their trembling was still plainly visible. He seemed, for an instant, about to break into one of his old torrents of abuse; but suddenly, with an effort, he restrained himself, paused, and then said, slowly:

"I have been misinformed. I did not know you had entered the university."

"I have not. I am the second Professor of harmony and orchestration in the new Conservatoire of Music."

"Then, by God, what are you—" The words were shot out by a furious impulse, and as suddenly ceased. Again a pause, and Michael began, quietly: "What have you been arrested for, then? How did you get into that nest of murderers: the brains and the soul of anarchy in central Russia—especially the creature Petrovitch, or Lihnoff?"

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Ivan gave a weary sigh. "Because I have been an unspeakable fool: because I was tired; and had been working long, and hard. I chose some new companions;—and now I find I entertained assassins unawares."

At this, the reflected gleam of a smile flickered across Michael's face. His hands relaxed. "Tell me the story—all of it," he said. Nor would the prisoners waiting for their comrade, nor yet the guards that attended them, have believed their ears could they have heard the tone of the tyrant's voice.

Without preface, and without apology, Ivan began his story, which he told baldly, with harsh stress upon his own deliberate folly. Only one omission did he make: and that was one demanded of him by the past. Irina's name never appeared in the narrative; and, as he went on, the hope that she might be successfully shielded throughout, grew large within him. Again, however, he underrated the man to whom he spoke. He had finished, and silence had reigned for perhaps ten seconds, when Gregoriev said, a little impatiently:

"But the woman!—Lihnoff's sister, Irina, who has managed to get away from my fools for the moment? Where is she, Ivan? You owe her one turn for dragging you into your disgrace six years ago. Give me the information, and—you shall go."

Ivan's lip curled. "Spy's wages!—I am no informer," he jerked out, his heart sinking within him, nevertheless.

Gregoriev leaped to his feet in fury. Almost as quickly he was back in his chair again. This conflict to retain his temper was so new to him and his repeated outbreaks were so characteristic, that one might have laughed had the situation been different. However, when he spoke again, Michael's voice was quiet enough, though touched with irony:

"So—actually—you are in love with her still!"

"Neither now nor ever," Ivan answered, steady-eyed.

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Michael, inwardly relieved, shrugged. "Where is she, Ivan?"

"Thank God, I don't know!"

"*Why* don't you know?"

"Burevsky was shot with the name of the place on his lips—unspoken."

Michael's brows were drawn and frowning. "You swear ignorance?" he demanded.

"So help me God."

"Humph!—Well, well,—it merely delays the affair a day or two. She's known in every town in the Moscow district, and in every big city from Odessa to Petersburg by this time.—Frontiers all waiting for her."

"Father!"

At the sudden title, Michael trembled. "What is it?"

"Father, it is that I want Irina's pardon.—Listen! Sergius Lihnoff has been her undoing. Freed from his fanaticism, his fascination, she will be as dangerous as a baby.—She always hated the treachery.—Before that supper she even begged me to give it up, or to postpone it to Sunday—a day when Ternoff wouldn't leave the offices at his hour.—I am willing to give myself as guarantee for her. If ever again she involves herself in a plot, I will come here and surrender."

He was interrupted by his father's harsh laugh. "Useful act!" he said.

Ivan flushed, but nevertheless repeated, steadily: "Give her her pardon!—I've not asked much of you in my life. Do this thing for me.—I won't want another."

Gregoriev frowned, but seemed to ponder the question. Finally, leaning across the table, he growled: "Don't you know that never, in my life as a Russian official, have I done such a thing as you ask? In all the years of my service, a criminal hunted has been a criminal sentenced."

"And now I ask you to prove your rule by this one

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exception.—I swear to you that the only person Irina is dangerous to, is—herself.”

There ended Ivan’s fight for the girl. The rest of the struggle, and it was a fierce one, passed silently within his father’s breast. Ten unbearable minutes, and then, Michael raised his hand.

That conference with the last of the four prisoners, ended in one of the profoundest sensations ever experienced by Prince Michael’s entourage. For the young man, a Nihilist “political” of the type the Chief hated with a hatred undying, emerged from the cabinet alone, unguarded, bearing a pass of complete freedom, signed, “Michael.” Two of the men, examining it, rushed back to the inner cabinet to discover if their Chief had been foully murdered, as he had so often been warned would happen when he persisted in interviewing, unattended, desperadoes of the lowest class. But to-night the Prince was not only alive, but also, Ossa upon Pelion, in a good humor!

The guards in-doors had by no means finished gaping over this fact, when one of the soldiers who, on examination nights, stood at the outer gate, came hurrying in with a fresh item. The freed “political,” so evidently under the special protection of all the saints, had paused as he reached the bottom of the entrance stairs of the palace, and burst into a fit of uncontrollable, hysterical laughter.

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It was this laugh, or, rather, the chaos of emotions which produced it as their synthetic culmination, that Ivan carried away from his father's house. So peculiar had been its tone, that even the soldiers at the gate who heard it were enabled to surmise something of its meaning. But only Ivan himself was fully conscious of how perfectly it epitomized the final disillusionment that had swept away from him the last of his youth. By that laugh, also, was engendered the mood that now rode him for many months, and was only thrown at last by means of a desperate strategy. Nor is that devil-haunted period to be reviewed in a single phrase.

Anger, disappointment, bitter regret, had driven him back to a mechanical performance of neglected duties. Thus, presently, his discarded comrades drew once more about him. Perhaps all save Nicholas Rubinstein returned at first out of a malicious curiosity; for Moscow still buzzed about the death of Ternoff; and Ivan's name had got itself mysteriously coupled with the affair. After their first visit to him five of his old friends, Laroche, Balakirev, Ostrovsky, Kashkine, and, inevitably, Nicholas, met together by common impulse to discuss their brilliant contemporary and the question of their relations with him. The five of them secretly admired, openly liked him, still. Two of them loved him, one confessedly. Of the remaining three, one was to become the closest companion of his famous years.

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Naturally, then, the decision arrived at was, that Gregoriev's nature was not to be forced. Theirs would be the loss should they repudiate him now. When he desired them, he would find them within call:—this last delicacy being the suggestion of Rubinstein.

Meantime, Ivan's nature, even in unhappiness, called aloud for solitude. He must struggle alone through his deep waters: waters of the soul, wherein float neither life-preserver nor raft, rope or even light; neither coral reef nor oozy grave, for such as he. Darkness and struggle alike lasted till the end of his strength; but, with exhaustion and the coming of dawn, came at last one mighty breaker, by which Ivan was thrown high upon the strand of a new country.

During the summer of this spiritual woe, Ivan was at Vevey: had proceeded thither as usual at the beginning of his vacation. He carried in his pocket a plentiful sum of royalties; and in his brain a hundred floating ideas. Moreover, the pretty town held two good friends of his: Kashkine and Balakirev, each one hard at his own work; but delighted at the opportunity of drawing Ivan a little out of his melancholy. In time, indeed, they came to think it banished, and the young man at peace. He was merely gathering strength to renew his battle: that intangible fight against circumstance and his own nature that has been waged by every fine and sensitive soul since the world began, and Abel bethought him of his lamb-offering. Meantime, Ivan's secret but ardent desire to work again worthily was fulfilled on a day that was to become one of the vividest of his memories.

It was a morning of mid-July, sweet-aired, hot-sunned, the waters of the lake just feathered with a breath that turned the pulsating satin to a white-sheened, crinkly azure velvet. About eight of the morning the three men, each brain teeming with its own ambitions and its

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peculiar appreciation of the mysterious Mother, started off for one of their habitual rambles. Ivan was in a mood whimsically frank, but changeful; and he blew the conversation this way and that out of sheer wantonness, till presently it touched a point on which Balakirev suddenly laid a detaining hand. Gregoriev had been analyzing the character of Ophelia—the delicate, fantastic disorder of her pathetic mentality; and something, some specially delicate comprehension of this particular conception of the greatest poet, caused the burly Russian to say, softly:

“She is abstract enough—elusive, rainbow-hued enough, for your harmonies, Ivan Mikhailovitch. Behold a tone-poem ready to your hand!”

Ivan halted, quickly lifting his head, as an animal who scents something: “You think so?—An entire tone-poem?” The tone was alive with attentiveness.

“Why not?”

“Ah—a little too fragile—too—wanting in discord.” A moment’s pause. Then he broke out in another voice: “But you, Balakirev,—it is your idea: your theme. You felt it, therefore it belongs to you. Subjects borrowed—mechanically worked up—bah! It is the worst prostitution of art.” And Ivan tried hard for conviction. Indeed it was quite true that he had no faith in other men’s ideas for his own use. Yet within sixty seconds of contemplation, *this* theme had suddenly taken possession of him in a manner joyously well-known. Already the necessary contrast, the shadow-background of Ophelia’s silver brightness—the melancholy of her Prince-repudiator, was tingling through him. Could he really relinquish it to the other?

No necessity for this, fortunately. Balakirev, bigger, perhaps, in generosity than any other musician of any time, known purveyor of ideas for men even smaller than he in accomplishment, forced Gregoriev’s eyes to meet

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his. All was said in that look, though presently, with a slow smile, these words were added:

"I call you to witness, Kashkine, that our Ivan here-with weds the Lady Ophelia for the space of one month; the condition being that we listen to the manuscript on the night of its completion.—Nay, you shall not refuse me, Gregoriev. I tell you no subjects but those connected with Russia can fire me. You are bigger—universal. Take this tragedy, then, and write it again for us in music."

It was thus that the young man gained the most congenial of the subjects that were to fill his summer months. The second, something bigger, though hardly more complex, was another opera—already bespoken by several *impresarii*, and founded on a translation of Keats's "Isabella." Into this subject he grew, slowly, but strongly and with full interest, till by August the tone-poem was nearly done, and the opera well under way: he having worked his six hours a day assiduously. And these hours of occupation gave him courage to bear the other eighteen, in which he was constantly forced to face—himself.

Ivan had, indeed, been badly bitten by the snake of the world. The poison, entering his system long since, had spread, slowly, till his present weariness brought him wholly under its malign spell. Disillusion, disappointment, distrust—they worked in him till he was in a fever of pessimism, denying the good of the world. The newest maggot in his brain was a bitter over-appreciation of the fact that, while, after long years of scoffing and revilement, his work had finally come to some little success, that success was only popular, hardly in any way professional. This fact every critic in great Russia had taken pains to impress upon the public and upon him; so that, while solvency was now his, the butterfly of lasting power seemed farther away than ever.

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Ay, truly, the bad blood that ran in his veins was his only inheritance! Family had he none. This appalling solitude must, plainly, be henceforth his portion: neither man nor woman should he trust again.

So ran the black reveries; for he was in the throes of his second severe attack of "Tosca"—the *Herzeleide* of the Russians: that national melancholy, borne of barren steppe and dreary waste, to which every giant intellect that race has known, has sooner or later become a prey, from the great Peter down to the littlest Romanoff; and from which more than the first Alexander have actually died.

Ivan knew it young enough, and long. Moreover, it had now come upon him at a critical time, just as he was emerging into broadened manhood. His salvation probably lay in the fact that for his work, only, could he throw off the black mantle; for much of the time he was wont to labor at the white heat of what is called inspiration. His meditations, his analyses, were those of a mature mind, replete with human knowledge of evil and good. But because his belief in the power of evil had become tainted with morbidness, and because he governed the kingdom of his own soul with a rigid purity, the friction of the two forces produced in him an abiding melancholy: a melancholy abstract, almost impersonal, thoroughly Russian, and yet, because he was a type of the universal, all-comprehensive. By unhappy degrees his whole life, his every act, became leavened and tintured with this melancholy, till it had risen to the height of his soul's acropolis, and invaded and overflowed—his work. Thus did it come about that the labors of the lonely soul given into the keeping of a yearning, lonely woman one New Year's night of long ago, came at last to reproduce for the world, in sound, the burden of the world. For who will deny that Gregoriev's music cries out with the dread cry

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of humanity in pain? It has come to be known as the *Herzeleide* of the Creation: the sorrow of the great, throbbing world-soul. And technique and conception had worked well together; for in this year both came to their fulness in him who used both wonderfully, artistically, yet always with the restraint that can come only through absolute self-mastery. It is the great reward of him who has made complete sacrifice of all things else: the act without which genius comes not into its own.

In the last week of August, the three artists left Vevey together: Kashkine on his way to Germany, for a concert tour; Balakirev to Kiev, the holy city of the Slavs, for inspiration; Ivan back to Moscow and the Conservatoire.

Throughout the ensuing winter he taught all morning six days in the week, reserving his composing for the hours of early morning and evening. After his mid-day meal, he came into the habit of taking long tramps through the streets of the poorer quarters, resting himself in little *traktirs*, finding unhealthy companionship in the patent discontent, poverty, and misery of the laboring class. By five o'clock he was in his own rooms again, and from then till ten he worked at piano and desk, a samovar bubbling at his elbow. Promptly at the hour, the new manuscript pages, beautifully finished, were locked away; and the piano closed. Then, in the shadowy corners of his bedroom, devils began to stir, and creep about, uneasily, waiting for their victim's nightly attendance at his own torture, where he was set upon in some one of their hundred ways. Fevered brain, weary body, tumbled bed; loneliness, regret, heart-hunger, unsated ambition; most of all a longing for loving arms to close about him, words of comfort and courage to come through the darkness that thrilled only to his own stifled sighs—thus the night, with its long dance of horned, fire-eyed beings, who held captive all

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his angels of mental health, faith, hope, joyous life. And so at last the presage of morning, when, for an hour or two, sleep would free him from the bondage of his inner life—that ugly prison, whose black walls were unbeautified by time, unsoftened by the clinging vines of memory; whose stones were but made darker by the shadow of the banner floating over all: the black flag of that “Tosca” that has unfurled itself above so many of the world’s great.

Autumn bursts of rain had whitened into snow. Moscow was now a city of dazzling purity topped by steep roofs and domes of gold and azure and water-green, so filling the air with brightness that one minded less the persistent leaden gray of the vault overhead. But cold and grayness are bad companions for the morbid-melancholic; and Ivan took his tone from the clouds, steadily repulsing the gentle efforts of his friends to draw him from his dim retreat into sunny mental climes.

The holidays went by, and Ivan began to realize that a few more weeks would bring about a necessary farewell to two more of his brain-children. It was the 2d of February before the Ophelia tone-poem lay before him finished, polished to the last point of perfection. Another week and “Isabella”—Kashkine’s translation, his own score—would receive its last stroke of the pen. Ivan waited till that moment came, then laid his two beloved companions side by side in their cabinet, turned the key, and left them there, while he fared forth into the frozen night, his brain at last as empty as his heart.

There remained, however, the fierce desire to place his children well. The Ophelia he carried to Balakirev and Nicholas Rubinstein, who sat over it one whole night examining, discussing, rejoicing at its splendor, its delicacy, the perfection of the reconceived masterpiece. Next morning Nicholas sent its composer word

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that he would play it at the fifth concert of his regular series, on the afternoon of March 4th. And Ivan was satisfied; for these concerts were the musical events of Moscow; and the new work was assured of a performance as perfect as he could desire: an audience as distinguished as it was ably critical.

This arranged, and one rehearsal—at which technical difficulties loomed large before both men and conductor,—impatiently endured, all Ivan's mind was given up to considerations for the placing of his opera. Merelli, he knew well, was thirsting for it: would make it his feature of the next year's season. Should he insist, it would even be rushed through during the spring. But he was not in haste. Moreover, folly though it was, he had already, some time ago, begun to desire a petty triumph: a piece of retribution for the man who had more than once brought him dire suffering. He wanted unstinted praise for a new work from his old master, the implacable Zarembo. Since the success of "The Boyar" he could certainly not be put off with a hasty reading and a damning criticism of the new score. His peculiar style, many a time torn and ridiculed by Zarembo and the great *virtuoso*, had now been applauded by the entire Russian musical world: was beginning to be recognized beyond the frontier. Certainly it was no longer within range of one man's malice. So far, no ear but Ivan's had heard "Isabella"; no eye but his had beheld the pages of that score which, by the after-judgment of five nations, remains unsurpassed in the history of opera save by the music-dramas of one Richard of Bayreuth. Already, in his heart, Ivan knew the value of his work. But his nature, ever prone to self-depreciation, never wholly believing in his own power till another had assured him of it, cried out for confirmation of his secret hope. With the stamp of Zarembo's approval, Petersburg, first city in the land, would crowd to hear his

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work; and it would come to Moscow, to his father, with a double reputation.—In fine, on the morning of February 15th, a letter and a registered parcel left Moscow for the north, addressed to the Director of the Petersburg Conservatoire:—who was at present in a condition of nervous irritability that kept his every pupil in a state of petrified wretchedness throughout the working day.

Miserable Ivan! Zarembo too—even Zarembo, was in the throes of composition! He was attempting a work as far beyond his creative powers as are the harmonies of Wagner beyond the quaint simplicities of olden-time Scarlatti. Wretched Ivan! Relentless circumstance!—To this monster of vanity, vain ambition, malicious jealousy, went the masterpiece of an offending *pupil*.

However, happily, Ivan was not clairvoyant. The satisfactory close of his long period of labor brought with it a state of passive languor. A quiet numbness replaced the acute sensitiveness of his nerves, and made him for the nonce impervious to his devils, though it could not prevent his inner sense of loss. For the creator who has lived for many months in daily communion with the living creature of his imagination, cannot, if he work as artists must, but come into a state of great and secret love for his dream-images. The feeling is sacred, indeed; for what dweller in Philistia but would scoff at such a sentimentality as love for work, and unhappiness at its conclusion? Nevertheless it is true that, when the hour of triumph, the finishing of a long, successful creation is accomplished, and eager Philistia waits clamoring to enjoy it, its master knows well that his hour is over: that his good-bye must be said. His child, stared at, listened to, conned by ten thousand eyes, ears, or tongues, is his no more; cannot return to him; for it is of the world, and the dream between them is dissolved.

This had come to Ivan. His two friends were gone

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from him to other men. His whole being cried out for rest; but his heart was empty.

A week's desultory waiting, however, suddenly brought an episode that turned his mind in another direction. Nicholas Rubinstein sent him a troubled missive, asking his presence at the next rehearsal of *Ophelia*. Anxiety stared from every line of the brief note; and, after some hesitation, and a very bad half-day, Ivan presented himself at the Grand Theatre; where he instantly found himself the centre of an uproar. The new tone-poem was impossible. Concertmeister, head of second violins, all the heads of the other bodies, swarmed to him, each pointing out the various passages deemed by them either unplayable or unmusical; and, finally, the whole number came to an agreement of scorn regarding one fantastical episode—an analysis of Hamlet's yearning to know the mind of his father, and a suggestion of his own indecision and unbalanced mentality. This, a passage of some thirty bars, was universally declared to be contrary to every known law or license possible to composition.

To this superior, scoffing company of weaklings Ivan, always gentle-mannered, shrinking from argument or petty conflict as other men from a nagging woman's tongue, undertook, by rehearsing, to explain his heart's work. Had it not been for Nicholas, he would soon have left the field to his opponents. Upborne by the conductor, he did manage to endure two rehearsals. The evening after the second, however, found him, haggard and white-faced, in the old apartment, pleading with Rubinstein, in the presence of Laroche, to give the whole thing up, to strike his name from the programme.

Rubinstein stoutly refused; and, the more he was entreated, the more stubborn did he grow, till he had actually argued himself from a position of doubt into a

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mulish insistence that if they played nothing else that day, Ophelia should be properly rendered. Indeed by his yielding, Ivan had unconsciously brought about the thing he had in his own heart desperately desired.

At a little past midnight he left his former home, somewhat comforted in heart and mind. However, he went to no more rehearsals; and speedily gave his associates to understand that he wished the subject avoided; though he failed to notice that his wishes were also Rubinstein's. Nicholas, however, was harassed to a point of fury with all the world. Never in his life had he encountered such insubordination among his men. He set out to quell it persistently but tactlessly, regardless alike of the temper of his prospective audience, and of the highest interests of the boy whom he had taught, protected, and now unselfishly admired. He was perhaps more wretched than Ivan. For that youth had temporarily thrust this subject away from him and was dreaming day and night of his opera, and of the word that was to come from Zarembo; that word of absolute capitulation that should make the performance of Ophelia a mere episode, barely worth considering.

All too speedily for the unhappy conductor came the afternoon of his fifth symphony concert. By two o'clock pit and stalls were black with people. By half-past, even the boxes were noticeably full; and at that hour Nicholas Rubinstein appeared, bowed to the tumult of applause, lifted his baton, and drew forth the opening notes of the second "Lenore" overture. Ivan, very still and pale, troubled and apprehensive, sat in one of the stalls near the front, between Balakirev and Laroche, with Kashkine just behind: both of his Vevey companions having journeyed a thousand miles to hear their joint tone-poem. Never afterwards, however, could Ivan remember a single incident of the early afternoon. The "Italian Symphony," something of Glinka's,

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one of Anton Rubinstein's short orchestral common-places, were played with the usual brilliant finish. With the intermission came palpitation, a dry mouth, and a vague impression of Laroche's biting truths anent Anton's stupidity as a composer, and his strange influence over hard-headed Nicholas. Then there was one, last, terrible moment of dread, as the conductor remounted his dais and paused. Obviously he was addressing his men. More than that, he was pleading and admonishing; for yesterday's rehearsal had been a piece of wanton cruelty. But now the baton must go up, happen what might. And immediately the twenty-minute practical joke began.¹

The orchestra played their tone-poem faultlessly as to notes. Like so many machines, the instruments performed each its allotted part. But, oh, Heavens!—the effect! Expression: fire, poetry, understanding—*piano*, *fortissimo*, *crescendo*, *rubato*—there was absolutely none. Never had thing so dead, so stiff, so hideous, so discordant, been heard in that opera-house. People stared, looked at one another, frowned for an instant, smiled; at length, tittered, openly. In all that great building, but one little group sat silent. Ivan and the three gathered close at his side, were like men dead. Long before it was over, Nicholas had flung his baton to the floor and left the stage; but still the orchestra went on—and on. In the silence following on the last chord—a silence broken by no demonstration, either of applause or of hissing—Ivan the composer rose, pushed his way to an aisle, and hurried blindly out into the streets. Thus he knew nothing of the remarkable sequel of the affair: how Rubinstein, an instant after the cessation of

¹ The incident here recounted, like that of Ivan's failure to conduct his symphony, is not imaginary. It occurred in Moscow, in the winter of 1865, with one of the early works of Peter Illich Tchaikowsky.

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the horror, had rushed back upon the stage, addressed a dozen wild phrases of explanation to the house, and then, at the end of a sudden clamor demanding Ivan, turned to his men, audibly fined every one of them a month's pay, after which, once again rapping the desk with his broken baton, he drove them, cowed and shamed, into a twenty minutes with Ophelia that was destined to fix Ivan's orchestral fame forever with the Moscow public; for it was a quarter of an hour after the piece ended for the second time, before the people would accept Kashkine's frantic assurances that the young man was not in the house.

Utterly oblivious of the turning of the tables, wrapped, as by a shroud, in that dire silence, Ivan was walking—walking—out into Moscow, through the frozen streets, under the leaden sky, the terrible anger and rebellion in him fading slowly to a numbing stillness—a stillness as of death. Was it really by accident that, on his homeward way, he passed the post-office to which his letters went? Without hesitation he had gone into the building. When he came out again there was an expression of fear in his eyes, and his heart was beating wildly. Nor were his steps any longer aimless. Taking the nearest droschky, he directed it first to a chemist's shop, then to his own room, where Sóssha opened to his knock, and noted, as he passed, the envelope in his hand, across which sprawled Zaremba's old, familiar writing. But the pink package with its crimson danger-label lay hidden in a pocket.

Ivan sat at his bedroom window for twenty minutes before he found courage to open his communication. For the first time, doubt of his opera began to stir in his heart; and the memory of that other long-past day of disappointment, when Nicholas had found him in this very room, and had tried to hearten him, came to him as a premonition of doom. How was he to be heartened

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now—after so many more years of failure? Nay—with a half-smile, Ivan laid his recent purchase on the window-ledge, and slowly drew the letter from its envelope:

“ST. PETERSBURG, Monday, March 10th.

“MY DEAR PUPIL:—Despite the fact that your manuscript score arrived at a time most inopportune, I having recently renounced all but my most pressing lessons to plunge myself entirely into an atmosphere of profound creation, I have conscientiously performed the task you imposed upon me. That this task proved very little worth while, I write with double regret—my own time being of considerable value to our world;—though it should not greatly surprise you, since it is thoroughly evident that ‘Isabella’ is a hasty, ill-thought-out, unfinished composition.—You will remember my constant reproaches of your excessive carelessness, even when you were directly under my own eye. And you will not expect me to think you very serious in your work when, on the very first page of your overture, I discover two unpardonable blemishes—an empty fifth (the first error of harmony mentioned in all text-books), and one of those monstrosities called, I believe, *chords of the ninth diminished*—a license actually tolerated, I believe, by a certain preposterous German school. Need I have read further to learn that, as a composer, you can never achieve a *succès d’estime*, and that your classical ideals are gone?

“To be brief, my dear Gregoriev, your ‘opera’—I give it your own grandiloquent appellation, is unworthy the signature of a pupil of mine; and, after a careful reading, I feel that the greatest service I can do you is to keep the score pigeon-holed here till you are able to laugh at your wild idea of its possible performance.

“Accept, my dear pupil, the remembrances of,

“E. ZAREMBA.”

Slowly at first, then with more rapidity, Ivan read the letter through. Even after he had noted the signature, he continued to hold the sheet in his hands, while his eyes fixed themselves on some distant object. Two, three, five minutes passed. Then he placed the paper carefully on the table, dropped into a chair by its side, and seemed to meditate.

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After a time, there came a clamor at the door of the living-room; and Ivan recognized friendly voices. Instantly he glided to the door, turned the key, drew the bolt, and returned noiselessly to his place just as Sóssha knocked. After a pause, the knock was repeated. Then the door was tried, shaken, and pulled. In vain. There came no sound from within. Ivan heard his servitor inform the would-be condolers that his master had evidently gone out again. There were muffled good-byes and so—silence.

Twenty minutes later Sóssha, dozing in his tiny kitchen, was roused by his master commanding tea at once, and enjoining him to let no one into the rooms that night. At the acknowledgment of this command, Ivan returned to his bedroom, to wait. Ten minutes passed. Then Sóssha came, set down the samovar and a plate of food, prepared his bed, and hobbled off to a quiet evening, a pipe, and the companionship of the old *concierge* who came up to sit with him nightly.

Meantime, Sóssha's master had not yet moved, but sat at the table where the water in the copper pot now bubbled merrily, his eyes still fixed on some far-off vision of night. There was about his appearance and his occasional slight movements that mechanical unconsciousness that is a strong signal of danger. For, when burdens grow unbearable, when one is taxed beyond that point at which nature sets her limit of endurance, there comes a condition of mental numbness in which men are apt for deeds quite transcending their normal natures. And this was the condition to which, by a long series of mistakes and accidents all similar in effect, Ivan had been reduced. Many years had passed since the time when, by the folly of a fortnight, he had been stripped of youth, gayety, wealth. Since then, balanced only by his little success of the previous winter, had come a countless string of disappointments and misfortunes,

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which, striking him always in one spot, had rendered him exquisitely sensitive. Now, in one afternoon, he had lost the fruits of eight months of sincere and careful labor. In his heart he knew that it was at last too much; and he felt himself driven, with a wild rush, down towards the valley of the shadow.

Tea had come; Sôsha was gone; he was alone with the night. The samovar hissed and steamed, comfortably; and to its accompaniment the man filled a glass with the amber liquid, tore the wrapper from his chemist's package, and poured into one hand a dozen yellowish pills. In the other hand he grasped the tea-glass. There was an instant's pause. He smiled and his lips moved. Then, suddenly, he lifted his hand to his face, gulped down the morphia pellets, following them with the steaming tea.—In that instant all his chains, loosened, rattled down about him to the floor. Brave man or coward, he felt a sudden mighty wave of relief oversweep him. The set, strained look left his face. His eyes softened. Once or twice he paced across the room. Then he went to his arm-chair, threw himself into it, and leaned back with closed eyes.

The period of waiting seemed long. He remembered so much that he ought to have done: papers that should have been destroyed.—Still, it was too late for that.—After all, this languor was very pleasant. He was glad his eyes were closed. Back of them—behind sight—there appeared to be a most charming country.—What was it he must see there? Out of the silver mist there was surely a form emerging?—a creature slender, delicate, crowned with a weight of fragrant hair! Clothed in rose-red, she; and her lips were smiling, her arms out-stretched to him:—Nathalie!—Naturally he went forth to meet her, to melt with her into that radiant light. And there came a great roaring in his ears—the noise of many waters rushing. Ay, they were clos-

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ing now above his head. He was down.—And so—night.—Oblivion.

There passed an endless time. In the darkness the soul of Ivan, ready poised, waited for the summons. No summons came. Must it indeed return within itself, unfreed? Yes, for the senses were stirring even now. Out of the void came a vague murmur of human voices—a sharp exclamation. Then blackness once more; this time complete.

Complete though it had seemed, when Ivan opened his eyes again upon the scanty furniture of his bedroom, it was with the sense of many days gone by. His head was iron-bound; his tongue dry and swollen; life a series of horrible retchings. After a time his dull eyes travelled slowly round the room. Kashkine was near, and Rubinstein, and two strange men. On every face was an expression of relief, of joy. Ivan marvelled at the reason. Then his eye encountered the table, and he thought he knew. For there, in a pile, lay the manuscript pages of his opera; to recover which, indeed, Balakirev had, during the five-day battle with death, journeyed to Petersburg and told his tale to the frightened Zarembo. But this and certain other things—the fact that there were men in the world who loved him, and a place in the world that demanded him, Ivan was to learn by faint degrees, and with some sardonic humiliation.

CHAPTER XVI

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It was in the November of that same year—1870—that “Isabella” had its initial performance, in Moscow, under Merelli. The original intention had been to open the season with the new work. But, at the last moment, the leader, despite his memories of “The Boyar,” repudiated his promise, deeming the honor too great for a Russian, and chose instead to present his other novelty, Gounod’s “Roméo et Juliette.” Ivan, resenting the act, promptly removed the score of “Isabella” to his own rooms; and it cost the *impresario* six weeks of persuasion and apology, besides a thousand roubles’ damages, before he could come to terms again with the young composer, who, under Rubinstein’s advice, was rapidly becoming worldly wise.

In the end, the *première* of the new opera was made under highly auspicious circumstances; but, to the amazement of every one concerned,—it being a far finer work than its predecessor,—“Isabella” made only a moderate success. Ivan’s style was still a matter of endless discussion among the critics; and in the new opera he had let himself out fully, repudiating all those Italian traditions which, at the time of the composition of “The Boyar,” still largely governed him. Time has proved his wisdom, however; for, while to-day “The Boyar” is seldom given, “Isabella” is a standard work in the *repertoire* of every opera-house of note in the

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white empire, besides having won laurels both popular and critical in Paris and at Covent Garden.

Gregoriev bore this little disappointment far better than his friends had feared. The long fit of depression, thoroughly broken by his attempt at suicide, had not yet returned. The summer had been spent on a walking tour through Finland, with Lechetizsky and Sérov; and he came home full of animal vigor. On his way back he had had a fortnight in Petersburg, and there spent two evenings in the company of Nathalie and his aunt, who was now suffering from a secret but probably incurable malady. The ladies, while keeping him at rather formal distance, had none the less shown genuine interest in him and his work; and he carried away one or two very precious memories of her who still remained the one woman in the world for him.

During the autumn he had done some excellent work; and confided to Rubinstein his decision that opera was, after all, not his *métier*; but that henceforth he should spend his time on orchestral forms, with the exception of an occasional group of songs, for which he had a special gift. Finland, with its stretches of pine forest and gray waterways, had made a powerful appeal to his peculiar imagination; and the "Songs of the North" form the first of his many tone-pictures of that country.

A week or two after his return to Moscow, he began to find himself haunted by the memory of his aunt's face, which brought up inexplicably vivid pictures of his beloved mother in the last year of her life. Moreover, he had, in her presence, read upon the face of his beloved lines of a soul-tragedy that was to bear him glorious fruit. For it was actually at this time, through these means, when he was barely past twenty-nine, that there was born in him the seed of that final effort of his genius, to be dreamed over for twenty years, and finished only as the shadow of death lengthened over

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him: his first faint vision of the master-work to be known to the music-loving world as the *Tosca* Symphony.

Autumn, and the first fortnight of December, proved a busy, fruitful, pleasant period to the workman, who was now well out of the heyday of his twenties and glad to settle down to the steady harness-work of man in his prime. He was beginning to be satisfied with the simple fact that he himself was sure of his own powers; and it was more than he asked when some incident showed how fully the outer world was beginning to acknowledge him as one not to be judged by ordinary standards. Surely he who has come to this at thirty has small right of complaint!

It was not often now that Monsieur Gregoriev, the professor who appeared so worshipfully experienced to his pupils, allowed himself to reflect upon the episode of the previous spring, when he had swallowed what he believed to be a death-dose. Yet, in his inner consciousness, hovered always the knowledge that he possessed a sure and unfailing refuge from that terrible "*Tosca*" whence escape was certain only through extremest measures.—Nor did the exquisite vision of the young Nathalie—his last living remembrance of that black night—often leave him, sitting through solitary evenings with pipe and samovar, quite unchallenged. Indeed there were already times when it seemed as if he need hardly wait for the excuse of the "*Tosca*" to turn refuge into indulgence.

Thus come we to the afternoon of the 18th of the holiday month: a gray day, and a windy; and bitter, bitter cold; when all dreams of Christmas cheer were frozen in the forming and replaced by some breath of the shrivelling air. Ivan came in from his morning's work, partook of a solitary luncheon, and was standing at his window, puffing at his pipe and absently staring into the

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street, reluctant to turn to work. He had been calculating, rather cynically, during his meal, on the meagre returns paid by the world for any labor requiring the cream of thought and talent: work priceless, indeed, so far as roubles went, but comparing badly in actual recompense with mere, mechanical labor. The subject still occupied him in its way, when his attention was drawn from it to the behavior of the only person to be seen in that little-frequented thoroughfare. This was a young man, clad in much-worn sheepskins of the cheapest variety. His hands were uncovered—actually bare, in an atmosphere of thirty degrees below zero! Little wonder that Ivan's eye was caught by, and that it remained fixed on, that figure of poverty. The stranger's gait was slow, and perceptibly unsteady. More than once he halted, looking about him, vaguely, as if for some resting-place. And yet, under his left arm, he was carrying, unwrapped, a good-sized canvas.—Was he delivering it?—Or was he—Impossible! No such person could be glorified by the title of artist! The questions passed swiftly through Ivan's mind, and then were suddenly broken off. As the youth came into line with Ivan's window, he reeled slightly, caught himself, and then dropped upon the frozen walk, letting his burden fall at his side, as his head sank into his arms.

Bah!—Only *vodka*, then. Some drunken artisan, who faced discharge on the morrow. Ivan turned from the window; but quickly returned to it. Vulgarly drunk the man might be. But even the fires of alcohol form scant protection against such cold as reigned to-day. The man might be frozen ere an officer perceived him. Moreover, as Ivan looked again, something in the recumbent figure suggested the abandon rather of despair than of debauchery.—An instant's hesitation. Then the watcher caught up his own fur coat and cap, ran from the rooms, and, a moment later, was bending over

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the lonely figure and placing a friendly hand upon his shoulder.

There was a slight start. With an effort, the head lifted. Ivan was gazing into a pair of clear, blue eyes, and realizing that there was no taint of *vodka* in the other's breath. Nay! That face spoke of very different things. Youth was there, and hardship, and suffering, and discouragement. More than that, the gaunt pallor of face and lips, the sharp outline of jaw and cheek-bone, told of want, great and immediate. They were signs that Ivan knew well. The fellow was in the final stages of starvation.

In an instant, Ivan had lifted the canvas from the frozen snow, and was helping the unhappy man to rise. When he spoke, his voice had the tenderness of a woman's:

"My friend, you have been unfortunate! I am a worker myself, and have needed help in my time. Come to my rooms with me. I am all alone; and you must have rest and food."

"Food!" There was a note of elemental savagery in the weakened voice. "Food!—My God! My God! Give me food!—My gloves only got me half a loaf the day before yesterday—or—three days ago it was,—I think."

"Are you strong enough, yet? Are you sure you can?—You see, you've been through a fearful ordeal."

Ivan spoke rather anxiously as, two hours later, he bent over the young man, now lying on the divan in Ivan's living-room and looking even whiter and wearier than before he had eaten the meal just finished.

But the stranger smiled; and at sight of that smile Ivan felt a thrill of surprise. The eyes and features lighted up till the gaunt signs of want were forgotten and the face looked like that of some cherubic boy. It

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was a revelation so pleasant that a faint suggestion of weakness—resembling the cloying after-taste of a saccharine beverage—went, for the moment, unnoticed.

"I want to talk to you. You see, you're the only one that's done anything for me.—You are an artist, too. I guessed it before you told me.—But you can't have had the struggle I've had: everything against me from the beginning: unknown, and terribly, terribly poor: ambitious, but with no *chance* for success!—But you've saved me—and my canvas. That was the last thing I had to sell; and without it there was no hope."

"Paints and brushes and knives—what could you do without those? Were they all gone?—You see, I've been pretty near where you are myself, in the past."

It was a surprise to see the sudden look of petulance that crossed the other's face. "Oh, my working-tools!—You see you can't understand. You, of course, only need ink and paper. But we painters must have plenty of implements to work with.—Why, I kept them and starved! Could I do any more?"

Ivan shook his head, slightly puzzled. "You've had a very bad time of it. If you feel able, tell me," he said.

The stranger elbowed himself a little higher, and took a mouthful of wine and water from the chair beside him. Ivan settled close by, cigarette in hand, facing him; and, during the hour that followed, his thoughts never strayed. The tale he heard interested him deeply, stirred his admiration, and, at the same time, vaguely troubled him. It was evident enough that this boy had endured an experience from which only indomitable determination of some sort could have brought him out. Nevertheless, ever and again, came suggestions of egotism, selfishness, love of luxury, that were naïve in their unconsciousness. But so foreign were these things to Ivan's own simplicity of nature, that he ended by repudiating his first doubts of the boy before him who had borne so much.

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"My name," began the youth, "is Joseph Kashkarin. I was born in Poland, in the spring of 1848, just after we had moved from Lodz to the outskirts of a little village near Chölm. All my life we have been horribly poor. But my grandfather—I am of family, you see—was wealthy, one of the first citizens of Lodz, but a fierce patriot. My father and mother were married in that city, and lived there very well till the uprisings against the Russians in 1847. My family had the folly to take part on the side of the nation; and when the strikes were put down, my grandfather was transported, my father exiled from the city, and all the property confiscated. Thus, when I was born, we were as poor as the serfs that were our neighbors; but we lived decently, because my mother was a lady.

"Our village was on the estate of Ladiskowi: the country-seat of the great family of that name. Before my birth, Prince Ladiskowi heard of my father from our Staroste, and came to see him. After that we were sometimes received at the castle—discreetly, of course, for even the Ladiskowi were under the espionage of Russian spies. But the Prince appreciated us, and wished to do more for us than our father permitted. We had books always when we wished them; and my sister Marie learned to play on a spinnet that they had up there, and had belonged, they said, to the Leczinski themselves.

"I wasn't interested in spinnets. That castle held something better for me. I can scarcely remember the time it first began; but I was not more than seven when I told my mother one night what I was going to be. She, I remember, hoped I would say a soldier, to fight for Poland when the final struggle should come. But I had seen enough of patriotic ruin. Besides," he went on, a little hastily, "I knew in my heart, even then, that art is greater than all other things.—That's not cant, Ivan Mikhailovitch! It's not hypocrisy!—Listen.

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"Princess Ladiskowa had been the daughter of a noble artist; and she had her father's love for form and color, though she didn't paint. Instead, she filled the upper gallery of that old fortress with a collection of pictures that would make any gallery in Europe famous. And she added to it continually, until a quarter of all her husband's wealth hung in that room.

"Those pictures were the things that drove me to this pass. I don't know where my talent comes from; but I soon found out how much was in me. I would sit in that hall by the day, looking, studying, puzzling out the secrets of line, and color, and technique, and conception, in the best — always the best, things, you understand; till I felt that I *must* begin work myself. So I went to my father one day and asked him for paints and pencils, brushes and canvas. At first he didn't believe in me. But I begged so long that at last he sent to Chölm for a little outfit, and I took them up to an empty room in the castle, where Marie and I always played in winter, when the family were in Warsaw; and there I worked in secret, at my picture."

Here Joseph paused to finish his wine, and then lay back rather wearily, while Ivan replenished the glass. He was plainly exhausted again; and his host, interested as he was, suggested that the tale be finished later. Joseph, however, protested. He felt himself a trespasser both on Ivan's time and on his charity. Yet he sorely needed help, and Ivan, if he were to give it, must know all his history.

"It was spring, sir, when my first picture was finished; and I had come to feel that the winter and my hopes were wasted. I was terribly disappointed in myself; because I had never dreamed that imagination, love of the work, and tremendous confidence, cannot produce finished paintings. My father, though, had come to be interested in what I was doing, and insisted on seeing what I

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had accomplished. I stood with my back to him, sick with mortification, till I heard him whisper one word of high praise. Then I found, to my amazement, that he was astonished at my success.—I was only fifteen; nevertheless, I was furious, because, you see, my portrait of my sister had not the qualities of the Velasquez, the Guido, the David, or the little Vandyke that I had worshipped, each in its turn.

“But from that hour my father became enthusiastic about my talent. He grew as eager as I for the return of the Prince, in order to get his advice about my future. We were both sure of his help and patronage when he should arrive. But we could not know that my personal misfortunes were to begin at once. It was August before the Ladiskowi came that year; and they remained in the country barely two months. The Prince was ill, and the Princess spent all her time in nursing him, till they started for Baden to take the waters. We saw them scarcely at all. They did hear of the picture, and the Prince sent for me to congratulate me. But I was not alone with him for a moment, and so got no opportunity to ask for help more useful than praises.

“When they went away, I knew I must wait another year for my chance. But even that was not to be. For, next year, they did not come at all to the castle. Prince Ladiskowi's illness had become incurable; but it took terribly long to kill him, and he had to be kept in a higher, drier climate. On his death, two years and five months ago, we found he had left my father one thousand roubles, and firewood from his forests forever. This money was left to *us*. Well then, saying nothing of the wood, my share as eldest son was at least two hundred and fifty roubles. With this I determined to set out for Moscow, enter the school of painting, and work so hard that, by the time my money was gone, I

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could sell pictures enough to support myself. Later, I believed I could send for my sister, have her keep house for me, and perhaps give her piano lessons, thus relieving my parents, who were all but destitute, now, through the loss of their patron.

“When I spoke to them of my plan, they made some difficulties about the journey and my life in a Russian city; but I waved them all away. They offered me half the money then; but, though perhaps you will say it was an artist’s due, I wished to be more than fair, and did not take it. I waited one week for my mother to prepare my clothes. My furs I left to my father, since I could not carry them all the way in August weather; but my first purchase in Moscow had to be this wretched coat and cap, and some woollen gloves. You are amazed, I see. But, though it was only August 18th when I left Chernsk, it was mid-October before I entered the streets of this city of the enemies of my race. For alas! I am a Pole; and the very sun that shines in Russia refuses to give me warmth.

“From Chölm to Moscow, by the straightest road, is thirteen hundred versts. Not one step of this way did I go by train; and but a hundred or two in passing carts. Twice, at Minsk and at Smolensk, I stopped and worked for a week, till I had gained an extra rouble or two for food or beds along the way. True, there was charity among the peasants; and I found many a meal left on the window-ledge for wanderers. But the food of convicts and beggars!—it was long before I, the son of a gentleman, could touch it!—More than once, truly—Ah well, I suffered! I suffered every fatigue, every hardship, that I might reach my destination with my bag of roubles as little depleted as possible.

“Two terrible months of hunger and ceaseless fatigue!—Didst thou as much for music, sir? But no. No. You are already an artist, and famous; while I—oh, it

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is too much! God is not good!" And Joseph sat suddenly up, excited by this remembrance of by-gone misery, forgetting the sudden exhaustion so recently relieved. Two spots of red flamed in his cheeks; and his blue eyes began to shine, feverishly:

"Who are those that succeed? Only the ones that have shelter for their heads, clothes to keep them warm, food to give them strength to work!—more; who can hire the right models, buy good paints, good brushes, flawless canvases;—who can afford to study, to dream, to wait! But to start at the very beginning—nay, with certain faults to *unlearn*—and expect to win fame on a fortune of two hundred and fifty roubles! Why, I *began* in terror! My first talk with the professor at the Institute showed me my situation.—And all the other students had so much! They spent, in a day, an hour, what I stretched out to two weeks, to a—a—"

Ivan sprang up, ran to the sofa, and caught the lean figure in his arms. Kashkarin had wrought himself up to a wretched pitch. The last words had been uttered in a tone high and wavering; and, as Ivan reached him, the life left his body, his cheeks grew gray, his eyes dulled, his breathing became fast and light. His rescuer plied him with weak *vodka*, chafed his hands, bathed his temples, would have summoned a doctor, but that Joseph soon began to revive, and in another twenty minutes seemed more or less himself again. Indeed, he presently unclosed his eyes, murmuring:

"I must go on, my friend. It is not long now.—Will you—hear me?"

And Ivan, who had become a little restless with his desire to get to work, answered, after an instant's hesitation, in the affirmative.

"It took me a month to find a place where I dared stay; and it's taken two years to find out just how horrible life can be. We had always been poor enough; but at

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least I had had shelter, clothes, a bed, and food. Here nothing comes naturally; and I could buy only two hundred and ten roubles' worth of everything. One comfort I had. I was in the art-school, free; and they thought I had talent, and was doing well. When I worked I was happy; I could forget. But at the end of one year they said: 'Two years more. Then you can begin to exhibit, and will have the right to sell.' And now only one of those two years is gone; and—I am here, *here*, alive only through charity!—No, do not speak! I must tell you. I owe much money, for my rent, for food, for paints; and I was carrying my last canvas back to the dealer's to-day, to ask him to give me back half of what I paid for it. My room-mate, Wencislaus Wendt, has done what he could for me. But the one who, in the beginning, did most—who once helped us all in the Students' Quarter—Boris Lemsky—was taken away in the first spring after I came. He was a university man; but he was good to me. I owe him my life: everything I have. And now they say that—what is it, Ivan Mikhailovitch?—Why do you look so? Do you know what became of him?"

Ivan had bent his head forward on his arms. "Boris"—the voice was muffled and unnatural—"Boris was shot through the heart, trying to get to the rooms of Sergius Lihnof, eighteen months ago."

"By—by whom?"

"The police."

"A—ah!—And his brother—Féodor?"

"In Siberia."

There was a moment's pause. Then, after a little, the youth said, dully: "Yes, it is like Poland here. Only, in this country, it seems they kill their own patriots.—Boris *could* not have done a wrong!—Ah, Ivan Mikhailovitch, my story has been no story. It hurts me too much to think back through the last months. I fought with starvation, and lost. Now I am here. I can do

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nothing; can be of no use. I am sick. I am tired. I am discouraged. Better have died on the street before I was fed again!—I can never go back to my family, to burden them with my wretched existence—a failure added to failures.—I have in me the blood of Titian—of Rubens—of Raphael! I see, I feel, I create! Color is life to me; form is the bread of my soul! But I cannot get beyond my body. Hunger and cold and fever—then all the visions go!—The soul of an artist, mated with the existence of a serf!—Almighty God! Do me justice at last, and free me from this useless torture of life!”

Once more carried beyond himself by this fragmentary outpouring of his long and unsuccessful battle, Joseph sank back on his pillows, weak and shaken, but evidently at the end of his confession.

Ivan was deeply moved; and in more ways than one. He pitied, profoundly; yet he wondered at much in this ethereal, fair-haired youth that was utterly foreign to himself.—He had had no more than Joseph to start with; and he had not starved.—But what use in saying that?—Instead, he returned to his chair, and sat lost in thought, rapidly adding, the while, to the pile of cigarette stubs which were thrown upon the table at his side. Joseph, meantime, lay still, watching him with weary expectation, while the clock ticked slowly round the hour.

As distant Ivan Veliki boomed the half after four, and the increasing echoes of *troika* bells without, announced the advance of the fashionable driving-hour, Sóssha entered with tea, and lighted the big table-lamp that presently mingled its soft radiance with the last glimmer of the dead day. Then, when the old servitor had shuffled out, Ivan rose, cigarette in hand, and, gazing down upon the stranger's white face, said, gently:

“My brother, Russia has used you hardly. You must, therefore, let me, not only a Russian, but also a fellow-workman, a lover of art, try to make amends for

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your unhappiness here. I can give you your chance—a fair one this time. It will be a joy to me as well as a duty to help you as others helped me in my time of need.—To-night, however, you are too weak for further emotion. You shall sleep here; and to-morrow, when you are more yourself, we will arrange for your future.—And now, if it will not be disturbing to you, I shall play for an hour. You have given me an idea, and the mood to work it out.—Perhaps you will understand—or it will soothe you—”

Joseph’s face brightened. He answered, with a note of eagerness in his still shaking voice: “Ah, I had not dared ask you to play to me.—But indeed I shall understand!—Music brings pictures of heaven.”

Thereupon Ivan seated himself at his instrument. When, as he expressed it, he was in the mood, few men could improvise more exquisitely, with a technique more Chopinesque, than this man whose orchestral work was so tremendous: so filled with the rolling grandeur, the passion, the energy, the gigantic climaxes, the seething, troubled depths, of a nature titanic in its conceptions, overpowering in their presentment.

For a time Ivan played, so delicately, so melodiously, and, withal, with an individuality so elf-like in its quaintness, that Joseph’s quivering nerves were stilled and relaxed as by the caresses of a woman’s hands. Then, when count of time had ceased, when the room was filled with velvet shadows, and the rich, dim glow of the crimson-shaded lamp touched only the seated figure and the ivory keys his fingers pressed, Ivan’s low voice added itself to the melody. He began to speak, accompanying his words with music like the tracery of fine gold that sets forth and enriches the deep beauty of perfect jewels. What he said came from him spontaneously, without any previous arrangement. It was as if the long-locked door to the inner sanctum of his soul had

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swung open, betraying all the wealth of a treasure-room the very existence of which was unsuspected by any other man: for the treasure it contained was the gathered store of his many years of labor, moulded now into the *Credo* of his working life: the creed by which he lived; which was slowly writing itself upon his face.

"Art," he whispered, softly, arabesquing the beloved, misused word with a ripple of vagrant melody, "is a high goddess, one supreme, all-sufficing, all-embracing, absolutely jealous. Her priests may serve none and nothing but her; and she is worthy of such worship.—Beauty of Aphrodite of old—chastity of Artemis of the crescent moon—wisdom of high Athene, of the silver spear—integrity of Hera the quiet-browed, giver of laws—these she combines in her perfect whole; these are the virtues we are bound to emulate who serve her. Let them that are weak, that understand not, complain of constraint under these rules. Such are unworthy of the trust. Those things that we need—imagination, independence, courage of conviction—every quality bespeaking her one great requirement in the characters of her chosen ones—originality—are to be fostered in a hundred ways not displeasing to her. But this first quality, which may not be bought either by labor or by gold, has been made the mark whereby she knows and claims her own. Once self-ordained, a man finds himself subject gloriously to her: divinely driven to prayer and fasting, to unceasing labor, to the long and beautiful vigils of the night that bring him her highest rewards: inspiration and love of her and of her service. For us she is lady of night and of day, of sun and sky and the green earth. Through her eyes we see and marvel at them all. Of her many favors to her chosen ones, which is more perfect than that power of inward vision that brings forth secret beauties in every corner of our earthly dwelling-places? How small a

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price to pay for this alone:—the absolute fealty to her that is her one demand?

“Yet there have been many unfaithful: many that have been called, and found wanting.—Bitter enough their self-wrought punishment! the yearning, never to be crushed, for her gifts once known and now removed. These in their anguish do her much despite: paint her as devil, call Philistia down upon her in wrath. They call us blasphemers who serve her. Yet what is she but the great Goddess of Truth, holding by one hand the All-Father; by the other her Mother, and ours? And by this Union of which she was the first-born, cometh also all we can know of perfect beauty, all our heritage of creation and creative power. Shall it not be for us to make this known to men? to the unbelievers? Showing them that, in working for our Lady, we are likewise serving their God, who is also ours?

“Thou, Joseph, hast been chosen her priest. Thou and I together know how little is any reward but those she gives: how vain that petty applause of the Philistines for which many an artist has betrayed both his art and himself. But we who remain long at our apprenticeship, learn well how petty is the outward and visible of success.—Have we not been led up into the high place of communion, where, for a little, the veil is lifted, and the image of Truth shown blazing in the splendor of Her shrine? These are our moments of fortification and of revelation. No man who has stood before that vision has failed to understand why the laws of Truth and the law of the mass of men can never be the same. In the communion we gain the strength that bids us disdain all applause of man given for things other than the highest and best. And it is our secret sense of this, which, through humiliation and defeat, through mockery and revilement, through want and privation, shall keep us steadfast and of good courage!

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"Look you, Joseph, even now she stands, Immaculate One, radiant upon her height, searching, with fearless eyes, our hearts, and those of that multitude that kneel, and lift their arms to her in supplication!—And some can raise their eyes to hers and smile; and some—look you, alas, how many!—must shrink and cower away beneath the scrutiny before which no deception will avail.—Those now withdraw themselves, to begin their bitter journey backward and down—down to their native Philistia: but never again will they rejoice among their fellows, for they have beheld that which has lifted them far towards the stars; and the companionship of clods must be hateful to them even in their fall.—But the rest, oh Joseph, see how they are gathered into those great mother-arms, and given comfort and good courage, power to continue on their upward way, strength to fight all battles, face all mockery, kill all slander, till the day dawns when they shall receive both the homage of the low, and the loving applause of the Most High; when they shall sit enthroned, wearing the double crown of man and of God.

"Oh Priest, oh Painter, such is our Law."

Ivan, moved beyond himself, struggled slowly out of the vision in which he had been enwrapped, his mind still soaring in regions of the imagination, where melodies sky-born did, indeed, surround him. But his return to earth came with a quick shock. When at length his reluctant hands fell from the keys, Ivan turned, instinctively, to the couch where the stranger lay. The gaunt form there was motionless, the head thrown back upon the pillows, one hand hanging limply to the floor. Something in the attitude, and the faint sound of quiet, regular breathing, brought a flood of scarlet over Ivan's face. The Pole's lips were parted in an angelic smile. Joseph the painter was fast asleep!

CHAPTER XVII

HERITAGE

WHEN he woke next morning, and the unusual incidents of the day before came back to him one by one, Ivan's sense of mortification at his self-abandonment in the evening had but one saving grace: the fact that Joseph had slept through his impulsive and extravagant fantasy. But unhappily, as it presently appeared, this supposition proved a mistake. The youth had certainly heard part of his rescuer's parable; though how much Ivan did not attempt to discover, in his embarrassment at finding himself burdened with a disciple who very evidently believed him a world-famous man.

First of all Ivan set to work to assure himself of the truth of the young man's story; and, this being proved, next sought his friends' advice about establishing him somewhere in the neighborhood of the big art-school where he had worked, (which, as a matter of fact, happens to be the best in Russia); meantime giving him the wherewithal to live till his course was finished.

Unquestionably, Joseph had been in a state of abject destitution. His rooms were bare of every salable object save the cheapest of necessary toilet articles, and a rather extravagant color-box and set of brushes. But this fact of his having refused to sacrifice the implements of his art, put a final touch to Ivan's growing friendship for and belief in the plucky boy who had suffered as he had suffered for love of his work. For one week Joseph remained in Ivan's rooms. At the end of this time he,

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now fairly well recovered from the effects of his long privation, removed to the new rooms provided for him by Ivan, Nicholas Rubinstein, and four or five more intimates who had become interested in the young fellow's career. With these rooms, of which the rent for three months was already paid, went a purse of five hundred roubles:—far more than enough, Joseph protested, to keep him during the ten months that would elapse before the autumn *salon* which would, he hoped, exhibit his first picture.

The young Pole made no trouble about accepting this help from his sudden friends. Nevertheless, his gratitude was well-expressed and patently sincere. Nicholas Rubinstein alone, felt some secret, uncorroborated doubts about the character of the boy; but he was too doubtful of his perceptions not to abuse even his own *alter ego* for a pessimistic cynic. And when, within the month, he received from the protégé a small portrait of himself, in which the likeness was so striking that it excused every fault of execution, he tried hard to take Joseph to his genial heart as, years ago, he had taken Ivan, on sight.

Every member of the group who had helped him received similar testimony of the stranger's gratitude. But of them all only the picture of Ivan, a pastel, in which the face alone was thrown out by the light of a red lamp, and the rest of the figure, seated at a piano, remained deep in shadow, was in any way remarkable for its execution. This, however, impressionistic though it is, remains to this day the one thoroughly characteristic portrait of Gregoriev; albeit in later life he sat for, and at the request of, three great artists. This little picture, however, being recognized as something remarkable, went into the *salon* in the following October, and received the first medal for pastels—completely overtopping the more elaborate oil which had also been

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accepted, and which got a mention.—Truly, the Pole's second start in life bade fair to be as sensationally successful as his first had been unhappy.

Joseph once settled and happily at work, Ivan went back to his own routine again in excellent spirits. Now and then he saw the young man, who regarded him, as Ivan could not but know, as his benefactor, his self-constituted guardian and adviser. Ivan was himself a man of so much individuality and independence that he failed to understand Joseph as one of those who cannot live without leaning, if not for help, at least for constant encouragement, on some one else. Ivan had, indeed, perceived that a little vein of weakness ran side by side with the peculiar spirituality of the Pole. But so beyond his own nature was this combination, that it never entered his head to watch and guard the young fellow as he might have done had he understood. Perhaps, in this way, Joseph's gift might have been saved to the world. But fate grants much help to no man; and when Ivan's eyes were opened, it was already too late. This did not come about, however, until, in the spring of the year 1871, something had happened to change Gregoriev's mode of life almost as completely as he had altered that of the waif thrown up at his door out of the troubled sea of the Akheskaia.

It was now twelve years since the youth Ivan, graduated from his four penitential years of military schooling, had taken his first long flight from Moscow, northward, into the joyous unknown: twelve years since he had put behind him all that half-comprehended blackness of evil and grim unhappiness that had weighted his boyhood with vague premonitions of coming disaster. Indeed, had he been told, at the hour of his going, that he should never again know a month of life in the same house with his father, he would have been possessed by a secret joy.

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Not so, however, Prince Michael. Nothing in all his merciless life had hurt this man of shadows like the defection of his son. Nor did the rolling years soften the sting of loss. Rather, as, little by little, the mantle of loneliness was drawn closer and closer about him, muffling him at last even from contact with the companions of his relaxation and license, the hardness and the bitterness in him increased, till something of it was surmised even by the jackals that served him. Still, of the processes of that strange nature, no one in the world knew much. His high position, held against all rivals by power of fear, naturally brought him into contact with officialdom, from Czar down to police-sergeant. But from every man he got the same species of servility, fawning or inimical, born of guilty knowledge of Michael's hieroglyphic map and his relentless use of it. And this attitude of the world, encouraged though it was by its recipient, bred in him no desire for intimacy with any of his kind, but only a half-indifferent, lazily calculating, contempt.

There had been a time when certain of his private occupations—interviews with personages of wealth or influence, cryptic conversations, resulting always, however defiant the beginning, in the same grovelling pleas and promises—had amused and interested the cynic most mightily: been the cream of his labors, indeed. But latterly even these scenes had palled; and it came to him with a faint shock of surprise that he was beginning to remember with relief those few occasions on which such talks had ended, by reason, truly, of some mere wanton freak, in unconditional release.—Preposterous indeed that the only acts of his life hitherto viewed with self-contempt, were beginning to seem the only ones bearable to remember!

His wife, a woman for whom he had had a certain tolerant affection, but no respect, he had probably not greatly mourned. Of friendship with his equals, he

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knew nothing. So, of sheer necessity, all the personal interest of his last years had been centred in the career of his banished son.—And ah! How he had suffered through that son! No other blow devised by man or God could have touched him save just the disgrace and downfall of Ivan in Petersburg. During the months immediately following the court-martial, the palace in Konnaia Square had been the abode of a fiend incarnate. Servants slunk from room to room in terror of their very lives; and the Governor-General, an Imperial Highness, had looked forward with dire dread to his occasional necessary visits to the chief of the Third Section. This lasted throughout the summer. Then, in the autumn, had come sudden opportunity for vengeance, of a sort, on Ivan's persecutor, Colonel Brodsky, whose disgrace and exile were achieved with marvellous swiftness, and who died, fifteen years later, in the horrible mines of Kara. Not until midwinter; however, did Prince Michael's agents receive orders to locate, watch, and make report on the condition of his son. It took some weeks before Ivan, half-starved, badly clothed, living like a day-laborer, was discovered in his garret on Vassily Island. Help was not proffered. But never again did Michael lose sight of the young man.

In the succeeding years, the Prince watched the growing career of his son with a mingled passion of anger, pride, humiliation, relief, and a mighty, uncontrollable eagerness. As, slowly, wearily, beset with every difficulty, Ivan climbed, round by round, the ladder of his chosen profession, his father noted his progress far more accurately than he himself. And when at last Michael was forced to realize that the younger Gregoriev had come to a distinction almost as marked as, and infinitely more respected than, his own, the grim-souled Prince felt himself torn by an almost unbearable emotion, half delight, half remorseful pain. For, all unconsciously,

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the musician stood a living reproach to the father whose ambition had found no better road to celebrity than that of trickery, dishonesty, blackmail, — all-unscrupulousness; while the boy, by personal sacrifice and hard and honorable labor, had reached the same end many years earlier.

A pity, perhaps, that his father's inmost heart should have gone forever unfathomed by Ivan. But deep down in the son's nature lay the sting of Michael's desertion in the hour of his great need. That strange interview held between them on the night of the students' capture, had done no more to soften the relationship between them than had the money sent to Ivan on one or two occasions when it had not been greatly needed. As to the interview, indeed, it was only Ivan who came out unscathed; for the ring of Ivan's laugh—that cruel laugh which Michael had understood far better than Ivan himself—sounded for many a month in the official's ears; and for a time he denied himself his greatest, but unacknowledged, delight. For three months he kept away from the opera on Ivan's nights, thereby suffering incredibly.

Many another incident showing the possibility of reconciliation between the two might be recounted; but none brought result; and, in fact, till the very end, a mocking fate kept the two apart.

In the January of 1872, Michael Gregoriev entered upon his seventy-fourth year. Up to this time he had held his age back in the leash of an iron will. Death was, to him, the one unconquerable terror; and he was determined to hold it off as long as human mortality might. To the danger of personal attack in which he hourly dwelt, he was absolutely indifferent. But with the least suggestion of physical suffering, the thought of the relentless approach of that blank nothingness of death gripped him till his brow grew cold, and his limbs trembled.

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Up to the Christmas of that year he had kept the appearance of a man in his fifties. Then, quite suddenly, his failure began. He was himself aware of it in December. By the end of January it was the great topic of the kitchen. In mid-lent the Governor remarked upon it to the Governor-General;—and hope began to stir in a hundred hearts: hope of a long despaired-of release from the terrors of an invincible blackmail.

Up to the middle of March he managed to get about alone. But as the breath of spring began to make itself perceptible in the icy air, Michael was forced secretly to realize that will and body were on the verge of divorce. On the afternoon of March 13th, his sleigh was announced, ready to drive him across the city to a council with his colleagues of the police. His furs—cap and coat—were up-stairs in his bedroom. Piotr delayed answering his ring. At the end of five minutes the Prince, raging like a school-boy, left the house coatless, wearing only a common felt hat, and in that guise drove for more than two miles in the open *troika*. It was a performance not unique; but it was destined to be his last.

Prince Michael was carried home from the council and put to bed, burning with fever. Two days later the whole city sat awaiting the six-hour bulletins that recounted the state of the mysterious official, whose attack of double pneumonia was as serious as it was sudden. The notice of the morning of April 3d read thus:

“His Excellency has passed a critical night, and this morning it is feared that there is slight hope of recovery.”

By noon of that day Ivan was speeding across the city in his father's sleigh, with Piotr, who had been sent for him, at his side.

During the drive, Ivan did not speak. By this time he had somewhat recovered from the shock of the news of three days before. But Piotr's word that his father

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was actually dying, brought up those thoughts which, hitherto, he had resolutely refused to consider. And, as his mind wavered through innumerable irrelevant subjects, he was subconsciously wondering why, in all the years of his banishment, the possibility of reinstatement and the inheritance of that enormous fortune, had never once entered his head. That his casting-off had been final, he had not doubted. Who had known Michael Gregoriev to forgive?—And now—even now, how could he have the faintest assurance that this summons meant forgiveness?—No. His watch-word must still be:—Wait.

When at last the flying vehicle halted at the familiar portal, the heavy door swung open on the instant, and Ivan found himself facing a sharp-eyed, lean-jawed man of forty-five, who announced himself one of the doctors in attendance, and begged “his Excellency” to come up-stairs at once. Marvelling at the form of address and the vast respect of him who had used it, Ivan followed, docilely, and soon found himself in the ante-chamber to one of the state bedrooms, in which, it appeared, Prince Michael had been installed. Here the stranger halted, and proceeded to give Ivan the details of his father’s condition. These were of the worst; and Dr. Fröl Pavaniev strove in no way to make them appear better.—It was a peculiar form of flattery, but one heretofore used with excellent effect.—Ivan, however, failed to appreciate it; and presently pushed past the pessimist, flung open the bedroom door, and—paused. A sound had reached his ears that struck him to the heart: a high, feeble, gasping wail, that was repeated again and again. Ivan shuddered, and immediately the smooth voice whispered in his ear:

“It is merely his breathing.—The lungs are nearly filled you see; and his weakness is too great to repress the sound. However, we must not expect—”

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But once more Ivan shook off the unbearable man, and walked into the room. It was a great, tapestried chamber, dusky in the early candle-light, furnished with heavily carved chairs and chests, and a huge, four-posted bed. In a distant corner stood a man bending over a tiny oil-stove, and stirring the contents of a steaming dish that stood thereon. Beside the bed was a sister of mercy, with the white coif on her smooth hair, her white robes girdled at the waist by a rosary which she fingered, mechanically. Finally, in the bed, shaded by curtains which, on one side, were drawn tight, on the other thrust wide apart, lay the huge form from which issued those ceaseless, sobbing breaths.

Ivan remained standing a little way beyond the threshold till Pavaniev entered and passed him, and the sister looked around. Then, for an instant, the wailing ceased, and was replaced by a high, wavering, querulous voice, that none would have dreamed of as belonging to Michael Gregoriev.

"He is come?—Ivan?—Bring him to me!"

Only then did the other doctor turn and perceive the new-comer. He did not summon him, however, but hurriedly poured his decoction into a cup and carried it to the bed. Then followed whispered words, the slow administration of the draught, and some further performance requiring the united efforts of the nurse and both doctors. Afterwards, all three drew away, and Ivan felt himself called. At once he was at the bedside, gazing down upon the fever-ravaged face, with its stubble of beard and the shock of white hair beneath which the cavernous eyes glowed and burned with something of their old fierceness.

"Ivan!" whispered the hoarse and feeble voice.

A rush of pity overwhelmed the son, and, for the moment, to his own amazement, he could not speak. Instead, he lifted and pressed to his cheek one of the

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burning hands. At that moment the nun placed a chair for him, whispering, adroitly, that strychnine had been given, that in a few minutes Prince Gregoriev would be much stronger, and that she, with the doctors, would remain in the antechamber awaiting his summons. Then, evidently by command, the three left the room, and Ivan was alone with his dying father.

For thirty-five minutes the hired attendants waited in the anteroom, before they were called by the white-faced son of their rebellious and powerful patient. Ivan emerged from the sick-room, motioned the three to go in, and then himself passed swiftly out and made his way down to his father's office, whither Piotr the omniscient presently brought a little *déjeuner* and a bottle of champagne—of Imperial vintage. Ivan drank rather eagerly, but touched no food. The revelations of the last, emotional half-hour had affected him to a point of exhaustion. For, though no priest of the Orthodox Church had been summoned to the Gregoriev palace, its master had made his confession—fully, without reservation,—to his son. All his life lay bare before the mental gaze of Ivan, who had in his pocket the slip of parchment containing the key to the cipher of the famous map—that marvellous biographical history of Russia which must always be a fortune of untold magnitude to its possessor. For there was many a man in the white empire who would have offered a million roubles for its destruction on the day of Michael's death; and there were yet others who would have given double the sum for its possession;—both of which facts Ivan had surmised. And Ivan knew also, now, that this treasure was but as one gold piece in a mint. He had been left his father's sole heir; and a few hours more would see him one of the wealthiest Princes in Europe. Strange, then, that, as he reflected on these things, there was no joy in his heart, but,

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rather, sensations of revolt and horror, flaming against a background of dreariness unspeakable: the combination forming an emotion the memory of which caused this day to stand out from its fellows draped in midnight darkness.

It was afternoon before the young man reascended to the antechamber, where Pavaniev greeted him with the report: "Great exhaustion, lapsing from semi to total unconsciousness. Any attempt at rousing might possibly prove fatal.—Was there any message?—No?—Then one could but wait.—These things were, indeed, most trying. And so Ivan seated himself on a bench against the wall in the dark little room, to wait.

There come to most lives certain periods of crisis, when the violence of shock drives away every commonplace thought or remembrance; when the mind seems a comparative blank, and time ceases to have any meaning. For an instant, or an hour, a mortal gazes out upon the void of eternity. So was it with Ivan, to-day. He sat for the most part huddled in a chair, lost in depths of the past, the strangeness of the present, the blank of the morrow. Memories of the last, agonizing, saintly hours of his mother's life, mingled themselves with remorse for his present numb indifference. A chaos of thoughts and dreams followed, bringing up detached visions of the various periods of his life. In the midst of them he was summoned to another meal; and he followed Piotr docilely to the table, this time trying to force a little food between his lips.

It did not occur to him to re-enter the bedroom;—afterwards he wondered why. Neither, however, did he think of going to bed. Numberless people were calling at the palace for information:—among them the Governor-General, who came in person. Ivan, however, saw no one; and by ten o'clock the house was wrapped in a vast silence. Piotr came to tell the heir

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that his old room was prepared; but Ivan still sat beside the fire, smoking, lost in vague conjectures. It was as well that he had not gone to bed. Precisely at midnight—the ghostly hour—the older doctor came quietly in to him.

“Your Excellency, I regret to inform you that your father, Prince Michael, passed from us five minutes ago.”

At ten o'clock on the following morning Ivan, quiet, self-possessed, entirely himself again, came down to the small drawing-room for his morning tea. He knew that a mountain of work lay before him; though there were people enough to execute his orders. But the only command which the obsequious Piotr could extract from the young Prince was this:

“Till twelve o'clock I will neither speak to nor see a single person. At that hour have the whole household assembled in the state drawing-room.” Only this bit of news could the excited valet of the dead Prince carry out to the kitchen; but the effect of his announcement was to send every servant, male and female, scudding across the court to their own building, to prepare themselves for the inspection of the new master.

Ivan, meantime, was occupying himself with the one matter which must be concealed from all the throng of executors, lawyers and officials of administration, by which he would presently be surrounded. During the night he had pondered on what was to be done concerning the affair of which his father had spoken at such length. And by now his course was chosen; his way looked clear; his mother, from on high, seemed smiling down on him in loving approval.

At half-past ten he stood alone in that sanctum which was to know its grim master no more. Behind him was a locked door; before him, the huge map, now entirely covered with the minute black figures that constituted

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the life-misery of many a respected malefactor;—that map which Grand-Dukes had prayed to look upon, and which, saving Piotr, and twice, in his boyhood, Ivan, no human eye but its creator's had ever seen.

Before this sinister cipher stood Michael's son; and in his hand was the little slip of parchment by means of which he was to read the strange secrets of his father's rise and position. For some minutes Ivan stood debating within himself as to his right to read so much as a fragment of this condemnatory document. If he began, what great name might not become forever dishonored in his thoughts?—Bah!—What need to fear for good men, after all? With a cynical shrug, he advanced to where the parchment hung; and then, referring each second to his key, began to read at the top of one of the narrow columns. After fifteen minutes, he drew the great table across the room, pulled pencil and paper towards him, and set to work systematically. It was an hour before he had translated the following disjointed items:

"March 18, 1832 : Contract for new outfits of line regiments Nos. 87—8—9 and 90, granted to C—— A—— (one of the Grand-Dukes). Perquisites understood, 30,000 roubles. Actual per. 280,000 roubles: all cloth, arms, and ammunitions being lowered two grades. Suspect Count A—— of complicity. Not proved. Remonstrance from H—— E—— overruled."

"December, 1853. Indictment prepared, November 11th, for inquiry into recent deaths of Prince D—— and his heir, attributed to poisoning, by person or persons unknown (?). November 20th, Princess D—— engaged in secret service work for Alexis G——. November 26th. This day investigation dropped; reconsidered verdict states poisoning to have been by sterlet caviar. Public feeling high. Note: Wait definite development. Try woman first."

Over these typical paragraphs Ivan sat for some time. They were what he had expected.—He himself, indeed, remembered well enough the D—— scandal, and the subsequent disappearance of the notorious Princess, who

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had been her husband's second wife, and had hated the heir that took precedence of her own son.—Had Gregoriev finally exposed her? or had accident taken from Prince Michael this hold upon a powerful minister, and one of the greatest beauties of her time?—Faugh!—Sickening, indeed, this wretched system of blackmail, more systematic, daring and successful than ever blackmail had been before!—That map! Good Heaven! What further revelations might it not contain?—What great name of Russia was absent from it?—Crime, intrigue, speculation, faithlessness, treachery, treason — by these sins of others had his father risen to his position and his wealth. Trusting to the ever-renewed baseness, cupidity, passion of humankind, and their cowardice in the possibility of discovery, Michael had known that his sources of revenue would never fail, his victims never rebel. So much, indeed, he had openly acknowledged. His defence had been: "No innocent person could ever be touched by me. One mistake on my part, and I should be lost. Whatever I may have done, Ivan, know that I have never been the coward, never the remorseless traitor, that my victims are and have been." And the man who could say this, the man who had taken pride in his skilful manipulation of the world's evil, and had used it all his life, had been his own *father!*

Little by little Ivan's rising emotions of shame and repudiation had grown into an excitement of righteous anger. All the blood in his body seemed to have rushed to his brain and to have remained there, throbbing. Before his mental eyes rose mental pictures of the events in his father's life: deeds of dishonor unregretted, that ate poisonously into Ivan's sensitive intelligence. The fearful significance of the foundations of the enormous wealth that had come to him; its foul sources, its beginnings laid in filth, in deeds of blackness known to men and left unrebuked through fear, came upon him,

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as it were, for the first time. In this mood he sprang to his feet, hands shaking, eyes ablaze, in his soul such a rage as he had never been subject to. For an instant he stood wavering, gone blind and sick with the fury of his shame. Then, with a hoarse and guttural cry, he threw himself at the wall, snatched the great map from its fastenings, and tore, and tore, and trampled and tore again, till that long record of Russia's corruption lay scattered at his feet, a pile of crushed and crumpled bits of the vellum that had been chosen because of its indestructibility!

When the mood passed, as suddenly as it had risen, Ivan sank weakly back into a chair, trembling, and gazing blankly at his bruised and bleeding hands. He was in this state still when, to his astonishment and displeasure, there came a knock at the door.—Had the years of his father's discipline been obliterated in a single night?—What could Piotr be about, thus to disobey his first command?—What!—Was the knock repeated?

It was a stern and angry master that shot back the bolts of the door and opened it by half an inch. And it was a very humble voice that addressed him from without:

"May the Prince pardon his servant!—What choice had I? His Imperial Highness the Governor-General commands your Excellency's presence. He is in the outer office."

Struck though he was by the condescension of such a visit, Ivan hesitated. Then, with a gesture of impatience, he came out, ignored Piotr's exclamation at sight of his bleeding hands, and locked the door after him, following his father's example of putting the key in his pocket. In one moment he was standing in the presence of the uncle of the Czar.

The Grand-Duke's greeting was gracious in the extreme; and five minutes of condolences and conventionalities passed between them before Ivan, driven by the rec-

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ollection of infinite work to be begun, precipitated that subject to which his Highness was troublously leading up.

"The graciousness of your Imperial Highness does my father much honor. At the same time, realizing the value of your time, it emboldens me to refer to a matter that may seem to you unduly personal. I am beginning the adjustment of my father's private papers, that all matters may be in perfect order for his successor in office. Now if there is—"

- "My dear Prince, this brings us capitally to the second object of my visit this morning. You are indeed most thoughtful. As it happens, I am myself—hum—ha—interested in this matter of— You must understand that I knew your father intimately, for many years. Having the highest respect for his ability, I took him into my inmost confidence on—hum!—many affairs.— So, my dear Prince Gregoriev, I will come straight to my point. You have it in your power to do me the highest favor. Among your father's personal documents, or somewhere, in some form, among his papers, there is something relating wholly to me: a few brief notes regarding an old, and quite unofficial, transaction which, now that your father is so unhappily lost to us, would be nearly or entirely incomprehensible and valueless to any one save myself. But to me, that paper happens to be of some moment: so much so, indeed, that really no recompense for your trouble in obtaining it for me would be too great for you to ask. Whatever office might most appeal to you—"

"Your Imperial Highness will pardon me if I request permission to answer you in deeds rather than words? Will you do me the honor to come with me?"

The Governor-General sprang to his feet. Ivan, without speaking, led the way back to dead Michael's inner room, into which the Grand-Duke preceded him, his eyes falling at once upon the litter on the floor.

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The royal visitor turned silently to his host; and Ivan, answering his look, said, slowly, without royal formalities, but as man to man:

"The sole condition that I must impose, and which, for your sake as well as *his* memory, you will grant, is absolute silence regarding what I have to say to you here.—Have I your promise?"

"Absolutely: upon the honor of my house and station!"

"The details of the incident to which you have referred, sir, I do not know; but the paper containing it does not lie among my father's documents. It, with many hundreds of such notes, was written upon a huge sheet of vellum which hung on the wall of this, my father's private room. Of the use he made of those notes, we shall not speak.—You were not alone by more than a thousand men and women.—Yesterday, before his death, I was given the cipher key to this document, and was urged to continue his use of it."

The Governor-General gave a slight, involuntary groan.

"How I carried out that wish, you may see for yourself, sir. The whole of that infamous document lies there, on the floor, before you. Within one hour those shreds will be in ashes."

"And your reward, Ivan Mikhailovitch?—What can I make you?—What have I to give you?"

"Two things, your Imperial Highness: first, your hand—to me! Secondly, if possible, your forgiveness,—at least, not too much condemnation—of the crimes of him who was my father."

But the Grand-Duke Dmitri, faulty though he might be, had not the vice of utter ingratitude. In that hour, and for the rest of his life, there was no exertion of power or strength that he would not have made for the man who had voluntarily freed him from the yoke which, for years, had been forcing him

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ever lower and lower towards the soil. He left Ivan's house that day with twenty years fallen from his face and his heart. One week later a royal messenger entered Prince Gregoriev's presence, leaving in his hand a little packet, which was found to contain one of the great honors of Russia:—the white-and-gold cross of St. George, bestowed only on one who has performed a deed of surpassing personal heroism.

It took nearly three months to dissolve every vestige of the world that had once revolved round Michael Gregoriev. At the end of that time there was a new chief of the Third Section in Moscow, who dwelt far on the other side of the Moskva. Thus the great palace on Konnaia Square opened no longer to receive the great dignitaries of the mother-city: nor rang to any sounds of revelry by night. The formidable suite in the east wing was closed; for the new Prince dwelt up-stairs, in rooms that had been his mother's. The palace routine knew little state. The staff of servants had been cut in twain; but old Sóssha was again in the house of his youth, having first superintended the removal of the furniture from Ivan's old rooms to the palace: articles gathered, one by one, during the years of Ivan's long struggle, and so endeared to him forever. The grand Érard, which had been his one great extravagance, stood in the new studio between two high windows. And about it Ivan's new life revolved, dreamwise, for a time. Indeed, Piotr and Sóssha and a handful of their fellows, used to weep with the weakly sentiment of age, as they served their young master in the rooms that had witnessed the long tragedy of their beloved Lady Sophia, who had been his mother, and whose gentle presence, outliving the wild individuality of her lord, still haunted the house for them as for Ivan.

CHAPTER XVIII

JOSEPH THE SOWER

IVAN'S new life was monotonous enough, uneventful enough, but singularly tranquil. The spring this year had brought not so much a quickening of life as a soothing sense of relief, relaxation, and a lazy contentment of mind. For the first time in years, Ivan felt absolutely at ease on the subject of money: knew no uncertainty as to future raiment, and food and shelter. True, the acquisition of wealth had brought him a loss of companionship: one never openly proclaimed; but perhaps, for that reason, the more keenly felt. In June, at the end of the year's work, Ivan resigned his professorship at the Conservatoire, secretly glorying in the prospect of thenceforward being free to devote himself wholly to his own affairs. The resignation put him still further beyond the old pale of intimacy with composers, painters and writers: the cream of that intellectual and artistic Bohemia of which he had so long been an esteemed citizen. In mind, he was unchanged. But a millionaire Prince *and* a genius to boot!—It was a combination too fortunate for the toleration of any class. Where Fate gives too lavishly, man strives to even things up for the spoiled darling of Heaven:—and usually succeeds uncommonly well. Envy, jealousy, injustice,—these Ivan believed he had known already. He found himself mistaken. It seemed now that not one friend would remain loyal. Anton wrote a sneering and malicious letter from Paris, purporting to congratulate.

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Laroche openly mourned. Ugly - faced, big - hearted Balakirev shook his convict head melancholy-wise. Even Nicholas and Kashkine could only hope, half-heartedly, that, despite his wealth, Ivan would stick to his work out of the inward necessity: the *divine driving* of the great artist.

Autumn justified the faithful. From the leisure of Monsieur Gregoriev, came his second ballet—"The Enchantress"—a series of rhythmical minor melodies in the most delicate of the composer's moods; a military overture, which was one long series of tempestuously mounting climaxes, built on the theme of the Russian battle-hymn; six songs to poems of Heine, with piano accompaniment; and, finally, the third of his symphonies, declared by Balakirev too technical, as more resembling a clever experiment in orchestral possibilities, than a serious effort in the most rigid of classical forms.

Unfortunately, despite these flat disapprovals of the accusations made against Ivan by his oldest friends, the summer's work did little to soften the feeling between the millionaire Prince and his scoffing fellow-workmen. Their cry now was: Who was he to step in between the fame, nay, the very bread, of men obliged to live by their work? Humph! He should see! It should be made very plain to him that neither wealth nor money could avail to win him entrance into the sanctums of art!—him, the greatest, the only great, artist of them all! Ah! Bitter indeed was the fresh humiliation he encountered: knowledge that, while his music was beginning to be sought for by every orchestra in Europe, Russia would suddenly have none of him! Nicholas Rubinstein fought his losing battles somewhat daunted by the constant cries of "hypocrite" and "toad-eater." Kashkine filled foreign journals with his praises. Useless! Henceforth, for many years, the concerts at the Moscow theatre, now under the baton of

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Laroche, knew Gregoriev's name no more: until that day, indeed, when, with his last and supreme effort, by means of the sheer force of his genius, Ivan overrode them all, broke every barrier down, and, winning victory unconditional, became at last the boast and the glory of the Russian musical world. But it was also out of this victory that Fate got her bitterest laugh at her puppet plaything. For death and fame ran neck and neck for his goal; and the race ended with fame four lengths behind.

Meantime, however, even in the midst of this first battle with his compatriots, Ivan and they were to meet one last time on neutral ground, under the white flag of truce. This was on the occasion of varnishing-day at the *salon* of native painters—Russians and Poles; where were exhibited works by men *hors concours*, together with those of advanced students: both classes being required to pass an incorruptible committee of twelve, who spared neither veteran nor tyro. Hither, on the artists' day, came Ivan and his former circle, to enjoy the success of a young Polish student, whose three pictures—two oils and a pastel portrait, were destined to become the sensation of the exhibit.

The afternoon was a happy one. The little group about Joseph made common cause of rejoicing over the work of their protégé. And, in later months, Ivan, sore wounded, came to remember these hours as the last of the old, free life of careless poverty, with its untold wealth of comradeship.

Certainly Joseph's much-lauded work *was* good. There could be no question of that. The boy's talent was pronounced, his style highly individual, his conceptions normal, unimpressionistic, but beautifully his own. One of his oils represented a peasant-girl of the south, leaning upon a black fence, looking off into her own gray future, with that wistful, patient gaze so com-

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mon to the low-class Russian. The background was a shadowy suggestion of steppe farm-land, unobtrusively implying vast distances of bluish-gray. The other work, more pretentious in subject but even more severely simple in treatment, was that of a woman of fashion, seated by a table on which stood a lighted lamp, the glow from which shone full upon her joy-lit face, on the sewing-materials scattered about her, and on the little garment, newly finished, which she was examining.

Joseph, his varnishing accomplished, stood about among groups of flatterers, his ethereal face, framed in its pale-gold hair, betraying very little of the elation that was tingling through him, as he listened to the comments on his work made by these men who "understood." Still, of all the extravagant words, not one meant to him so much as Ivan's strong hand-clasp and his smiling:

"It is worth the thousand-mile walk;—yes, and the starvation too, Joseph, isn't it?"

And Joseph bowed his head, in momentary, deep sincerity.

Nicholas Rubinstein was not wholly justified in his conclusion that Joseph's manner to a poor and untitled Ivan would have lost the greater part of its obsequiousness. Joseph did care for his benefactor, honestly. But later in the afternoon there came a little incident which, in some measure, bore out the old musician's instinctive scepticism. Nearly every one in the room had gathered about one or another of the samovar-tables, indulging in their favorite recreation of eating; and busily talking shop. Ivan, however, still occupied with the work of his protégé, remained seated before the smaller picture, comparing it with a little, two-year-old sketch in oil which he had brought with him. Presently Joseph moved towards him. Nicholas,

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watching, saw the young fellow hesitate, palpably, for an instant, and then speak a few rapid, low-voiced sentences into Ivan's ear. Ivan's face betrayed a strain of surprise; but Nicholas saw the nod that accompanied his answer, and knew that it meant assent—to what, he guessed. Later, when good-byes were being said, Joseph was somewhat discomfited at the extreme chilliness of the gruff old man, who had seen what Joseph imagined he had kept absolutely invisible:—the passing of certain hundred-rouble notes from Ivan's hand to his own:—Ivan could now so well afford to give!

Late in the afternoon, when the young painter regained his own studio, he threw himself upon his battered sofa with a sigh of relief that was half-petulant. He had had an afternoon doubly successful; for he had taken a long-contemplated plunge. In his pocket was another whole year of frugality; or a month, one little month, of extravagance. His question now was, which should it be? If he took a scholarship with either of his pictures—and how they had been admired to-day!—there, in itself, was a year's subsistence. Again, would not one or both the pictures sell, at a good price? The whole wealth of Moscow would pass through those rooms during the next month. Only take the fancy of a wealthy man, or woman, and he might say good-bye forever to frugality: to his whole life of unrelenting poverty.

Ah, how he hated it, all those dreary little shifts that had formed the laws of his life! How he yearned, how he longed, for a month of carelessness concerning the state of his pocket!—But what a humiliation to *ask* for money—even from great-hearted Ivan! Ivan, with his new millions—why had he not offered something, instead of letting himself be dunned? Truly, truly, Providence—*his* Providence, was a sorry jade! Tricks enough she had certainly played him: him, to whom she

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had given so enormous a secret capability for spending! With a crust for food, a rag for his covering, a garret for shelter, she had endowed him with artist-dreams of luxury, with every extravagant desire, and but one, faint possibility of attainment. One, however, he had; together with a higher ambition than that for material things. He longed for the best sort of fame: was ready to do the best of work to gain it: provided only it should also bring him wealth!—Perhaps, of all the contradictions about this youth, the oddest was that, to those who knew him, his most salient characteristic appeared to be, not one of his many weaknesses, but his single, undying strength. Possibly, however, the explanation lay in the fact, that Joseph himself did not realize the extent of his baser nature. As yet his many thorns had in no wise hurt the single blossom. All his weaknesses could not hide his strength. A little more, indeed, and this strength might have grown till it hid all the rest, and formed a safe refuge for him from himself.—Ah! Had that but been possible!—How many geniuses have, indeed, come into the world only to go out of it unfamed, unsuspected? How many have dropped down to hell through the pitfalls of their own creation, and so been lost forever to the world? Good God! How pitiful it is!—Turn we away.

Joseph Kashkarin had many a plaint for his unfortunate lot. But the one which came to tongue oftener than any other, was that which proclaimed the red fires of the artist-flesh to burn within him, while he bemoaned the fact that he had never yet found a woman worthy of his devotion. Loudly did he bewail his overfastidiousness; in which, nevertheless, he secretly glorified. But now for so long had he mourned his loveless estate, that, since of all the subjects of his brush woman was most congenial to him, he had gradually come to lay every fault of his work, crudeness of coloring, hardness

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of line, harshness of texture, finally, his very conventionality of conception, to the door of his ignorance of the grand passion, in which he expected to attain to his final development. In the end, as might have been expected, Fate, wearying of his everlasting complaint, became suddenly impatient, and set about granting his desire with diabolical fulness.

Joseph's peasant-girl took a mention, but no prize. Chilled by this and by the unaccountable failure of either picture to sell, he laid away, for the hour, his dreams of folly, and worked through the winter steadfastly. At length, however, the gray cold wore itself away; and, with the breath of the new spring, there came for Joseph desire fulfilled, and an end of steadfastness for the rest of his life.

Endless as the Russian winter seems, there does, at length, when hope is dormant, come that quickening of nature when the green steppes break through snowy coverlets, when swelling buds burst the last, thin ice-films from the branches, and the melancholy peasant-chants come nearer to the major key than at any other season. Now, also, was the time when young blood rushes like sap through the veins, and artists' dreams turn, irresistibly, to the greatest of their subjects. On such a day it was that Joseph Kashkarin and Irina Petrovna came for the first time face to face.

Irina's reappearance in the city of her brother's fall, was made a year or more after the battle in the Akhe-skaia. The history of the twelvemonth of her hiding, lay buried in that oblivion that must shroud frequent periods of lives like hers. It seemed destined that she should flash, at intervals, across certain horizons, and never without bringing to bear some momentary, powerful influence upon the life she illumined. She was not, like some of her class, led by principles more or less consistent and dependable: sordid greed for money;

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complete selfishness; experienced heartlessness. To her own detriment, Bohemia and penury could attract her as surely and as frequently as heavily paid-for luxury. Contrast, indeed, constituted the one law of her lawlessness. Without this, how had it been possible for that first contact with the young painter to have filled her, instantaneously, with the variable flame that had so often been her undoing?

- Mademoiselle Petrovna, a young person fairly notorious, by this time, among the half-world of three or four Russian cities, was now living in Moscow, perfectly protected by the patronage of the universally connected, much-besought, Prince G——: a venerable personage of some seventy winters, whose decorous mansion in the old Equerries' Quarter was considerably better known than his *bijou maisonnette* in the Fourmenny district, at present occupied by the young lady of whom he ardently desired to possess a discreet portrait: one which, as an "ideal figure" might safely decorate drawing-room or library in his ostensible home. But in this affair, as in all other really desirable matters, Prince G—— easily perceived the difficulty of complete discretion. Alas! To no famous brush dared he intrust his rather obvious commission. And his search for a competent, yet unknown, artist, led him at last to the studio of Monsieur Kashkarin, who had been recommended by the voice of Fate speaking through the decorous tongue of the Academy director.

Irina appeared upon the threshold of Joseph's modest studio clad from top to toe in a billow of flaming scarlet: tulle and velvet and poppies cunningly mingled, and well foiled by the solemn black of her escort's formal garb. While the vision floated about the room examining the various sketches and studies scattered over the walls, Joseph managed to keep his head sufficiently to go through the necessary preliminaries

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with his Excellency, who, a trifle nervous about his situation, and convinced that no danger to his possession could possibly accrue through this shy and boyish young artist, so plainly in the throes of poverty, was much relieved when the matter of size and price had been settled and he could take his departure, leaving Irina to her first sitting.

As the door closed behind the well-padded back of her Prince, Irina's indifference dropped from her like a cloak, and she returned to the proximity of the intoxicated boy, captured his blue gaze with the slumbrous fire of her Oriental eyes, and then laughed at him—and laughed—and musically laughed, till the fire from his brain leaped to his finger-tips. Suddenly, commanding her, he flung his canvas on the easel, seized his charcoal, and, completely misconstruing his own sensations, began to draw her as she stood.

The work of that hour was inspirational. In it, he accomplished more than was done in the succeeding month. In the very beginning he managed, unconsciously, to make Irina respect his talent. She saw all the best of him, the finest of his power: which never before had flamed so high, and was never to flame so high again. But Irina, filled from top to toe with the *tempérament* that comprehends every vagary and something of genius, watched the illumination of his face and eyes till she was beset with high desire: till her present life, with its hollow luxury, its spiceless ease, its savorless pretence, had become abominable to her. Her heart was in the room wherein she stood, set all upon the man for whom she posed: whose eye, as yet, looked upon her not as man but as workman, who sought only the secret message in her written for his brush.

Through the first two hours, during which she alternately posed and rested, the two of them spoke scarce one word. In the beginning, their sensations were

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crudely formulative. But they rose, by degrees, till, at the end, each was beset by a force so powerful that action had become an impossibility. Their farewell ran thus:

"When do you wish me again, Monsieur?"

"When you can come, Madame."

"In two days?"

"Yes; in two days."

"*Alors—au revoir!*"

"*Au revoir, Madame.*"

Thus they entered upon the eight-and-forty hours that were to prepare the storm of the next meeting which was to set upon them both the seal of the inevitable. Well for Prince G—— that there came to him no inkling of the scene which ended that second afternoon! Irina lay back upon the artist's couch in the dreamy languor of her most dangerous mood. Joseph knelt on the floor at her side, her hands clasped in his, the broken, cryptic syllables of innermost intimacy already flowing familiarly between them.—How it had come about, neither one of them could possibly have told. But that night Joseph, sitting alone at his high window gazing over the silvered city, knew at last that he had entered into the kingdom: that, if he should live a thousand years, he could never know again the pure emotion of the hours that were gone. He sat there in the dusk, and his lips formed broken phrases—fragments of the thoughts that swirled through his storm-ridden brain:

"It has come!—It is here!—I am a true artist now.—Now, too, I am a man.—Irina!—Irina!"

And, alas! Joseph fully believed himself! He never knew that, had he been in truth an artist now, those last words of his would have been: "My work! My work!" For to those who hold the greatest gift, there is no experience in life, from highest joy to highest sorrow, that is not transmuted, in the crucible of the artist's brain, into some new form of knowledge to be used in his labor.

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Such a one was Ivan, whom Nathalie herself could only have served again and again to quicken into higher and richer musical expression: to whom her loss had only meant many years of minor melodies. Such a man as Ivan, Joseph still believed himself to be. Slowly, inch by inch, with every step a form of torture, was he to learn the truth.

Thus abruptly, thus all unheralded, arrived Joseph's passion-time. In the beginning, Irina came for her sittings twice or thrice in the week. Then, driven by the force of their two natures, the visits became daily, and there began, in the Fourmenny *maisonnette*, a system of shift and subterfuge not wholly new to its mistress. None knew better than Irina herself the inevitable end of this period of excuse and deception. But, so long as Joseph continued to combine for her those qualities of novelty, inexperience, and inexhaustible feeling that had seized so firmly upon her imagination, she was reckless of discovery. After all, her Prince was proving exceptionally stupid and complaisant. Her words were gospel to him; and her frequent invisibility seemed only to whet his appetite for to-morrow.

Meantime Joseph, perfectly ignorant of his road, careless of the future, enamoured of each passing hour, left Irina absolutely free so far as her course was concerned. He himself, however, was neglecting his professional duties. All the work he did was upon two portraits of her; for he had decided to finish for himself that first, Carmen-like creation so happily seized upon. Meantime, there was another for the Prince; in which the too-vivid draperies were toned down to pinkish clouds; the background left in misty indecision; and all his care expended on the face: a face that presently looked forth from the canvas with a gaze so startlingly lifelike, that Irina herself frequently shivered at its uncanny reality.

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No. There could be no doubt about the marvel of Joseph's present technique. Yet, for all that, he had already lost something of his former purity of style. And now, for six long months, he worked at nothing but studies of the same subject; knowing only the criticisms of Irina herself. The days of honest labor and study, the earnest self-criticism and self-examination, were gone. For the moment he might believe himself to be of the elect few. But the period was brief; and, with the coming of the first cloud, the whole horizon suddenly grew black.

It was the early twilight of an October day. For the third or fourth time, Irina had failed in her appointment, and Joseph, sitting alone, waiting for the sound of her step, had drifted into a reverie concerning himself and his summer's work. He was kneeling in the midst of a dusty little group of last year's studies, regarding them with newly contemplative eyes. Were they, after all, with all their muddy color and uncertain composition, better—actually *better*, in the fundamentals that count, than those two glorified forms that ruled the room?—For the first time since the very beginning, he doubted: began to feel a weariness of that garish sea of color, beside which the dull little studies suddenly looked so quietly restful; so sincere.

He had come thus far in his musing; and his face was troubled; his blue eyes had darkened, when, suddenly, without warning, his door was flung wide. The well-known, silken swish of skirts, a breath of the familiar perfume of gown and hair and person, and then Irina—an Irina unfamiliar—had entered, shut and bolted the door behind her, stared at him for a moment, and then began to weep, hysterically.

"*You!*—But Irina—I—you.—But there is no light for the pose now!"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* A sitting!—Pouf! Listen, *mon*

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cher! It has come. I have always known it must.—Monsieur le Prince knows all the truth.—Quelle scène!—Incroyable pour un viellard!—And I am banished. I have none now but you, mon ami. What shall you do with me, Joseph?” And, as she spoke, her arms crept sinuously about the young man’s stiff figure, and she drew him, by degrees, to the couch, at her side.

There followed silence: a silence so long that, almost for the first time in her career, Irina began to wonder if she could have miscalculated the strength of her hold on this boy for whom she had conceived so violent a passion.

Had she, indeed, been able, at that moment, to read the depths of Joseph’s mind, her wonder would probably have been augmented to fear. For, now that the thing that Joseph had been wanting for months had come to pass, he was suddenly thrown back upon himself in a panic of doubt. His mind was a blind chaos of mingled emotion and desire: the new-born anxiety concerning his profession; the powerful fascination exerted by the mere presence of the woman he loved; and, lastly, a selfishly inconsistent anger that Irina’s act had forced him at last to the long-desired point of decision.

These three feelings warred within him, and the little force of good fought valiantly and well. But, unhappily, Joseph had always regarded the promptings of conscience as unwarrantable and unnecessary; and that inner voice, so often stifled, had grown weak. Irina was now beside him, the fragrance of her personality stealing upon him with all its accustomed magnetism. Surely, too, she had been inspired to the silence she kept? He never dreamed of the heart-sickness that was slowly invading her. Had he guessed it, that of the brute which lay in him, would instantly have risen up against her. For the young gentleness of his face belied him. As it was, however, there came a moment when the breath of

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perfume was strong; when conscience took a step too far. One instant—and he turned, clasping her in his arms:

"So let it be, beloved! Thou hast come to me:—be mine! If I have little wealth, I can give thee love:—love, the glory of life, clothed in colors of scarlet and gold!—Thou art here to be my inspiration. Mayst thou find me worthy!—Ah, see! The world shall kneel to us yet: shall glorify us with laurel and with gold.—Yes, it has come at last, beloved, the freedom of our love!"

And the woman, with a half-sob, yielded herself to the strong, young arms, nor wasted a thought upon that crushed and broken talent now lying between them, dead, upon the paint-stained floor.

Such was the beginning of their hundred days: the three months' madness that was to become the amazement and the scandal of the Students' Quarter. Irina's history, well known to every one except her lover, kept this strange romance always vivid, always replete with dramatic possibilities. Meantime, however, during the first weeks, the small *ménage* prospered amazingly. Irina had been living for some time among cloying luxuries. She brought with her a considerable sum of money and jewels, the amount of which seemed, to Joseph's eyes, princely enough. He rejoiced over their sudden access of wealth; while she amused herself by adapting her tastes to the comparative poverty of her present life. Moreover, the enthusiasm that was really borne from the pleasant novelty of this existence, seemed, to the boy, wholly the result of her love for him. He had been possessed by a sudden demon of work.—Ah! *How* he worked, during those brief weeks! He had resigned, now, from his classes, and was painting for the public. In the beginning, his things caught the general fancy, and he had an unquestioned vogue. It was pot-boiling, certainly; but, for the moment, glaring

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faults were concealed by the meteoric brilliancy of his technique. Irina was his only model. But what the world likes, it is willing to have repeated; and head after head of the beautiful woman was sold, and still the dealers clamored for more.

Of his old work—those laborious little studies of still life or nature, the public would have none. Even the two life-sized pictures, which had more than a little merit in them, remained unpurchased. Both were for sale now; for Joseph needed no portrait of what was his; and Prince G—— naturally never commanded his to be delivered.

There did, at length, come one offer for the Carmen picture; but of it Joseph never heard. It had been made by a man who, calling at the studio one day, found Mademoiselle Irina alone; and to whose impulsive proposition she had replied—with a certain manner—that his price was too low—"as yet." Rapidly estimating the pretty woman, and catching the tone of her last word, the gentleman said no more about the picture; but presently left the studio and the lady together, and returned to his club—to bide his time.

Six weeks saw the end of the first phase of this oft-acted drama. Intoxicated by the success which no one had as yet explained to him, Joseph began suddenly to discover spending-powers of his own. After that, work as he would, a Raphael could scarcely have kept his *ménage* out of debt. Irina, watching her lover minutely, and perfectly foreseeing the forthcoming exigencies of the situation, was quite prepared when Joseph came to her for advice. That night was the first on which they drove to a certain house in the aristocratic Sretenskaia, where, by day and by night, the various rooms glowed with light, and, during twenty hours of the day, a dozen great, green tables were wreathed by men and women to whose ears the chink and rustle of gold and notes were

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sounds that followed and drove them, day by day, night by night, on towards that low-lying land where dwell the throngs that are gathered together in the outer darkness that is so much denser than the tomb.

Lights!—Green tables, gold-bespattered!—The droning undertone of *croupiers*; the continual, languid in-rake and out-rake of golden piles, of crackling notes, of *rouleaux*—on one of which the old-time Joseph could have lived so well for months: here, side by side, the much-remarked woman, the pale-faced, angel-eyed youth, quietly took their places, and began to play.

CHAPTER XIX

HIS HARVEST

"No Ivan, you'll do better alone. You have influence with him.—Good God! a year ago he worshipped you! I believe there was something you told him—some pointer you gave him at one time about work, that made an immense impression on him.—You mean something to him. Me, he dislikes. He knew months ago that I—well, saw something of his infirmity. But, while I don't believe in him, this affair mustn't go on. The fellow *could* have learned to paint. He's killing himself now: not physically, but mentally and morally.—The whole city's waked up to him. His pace is unprecedented.

"Come, there's nothing more to say, Ivan Mikhailovitch. Go and pull your protégé out of the mire—if you can!"

The two men rose, simultaneously. Ivan was very pale. He was still in the first shock of full revelation; and it was a moment or two before he put his hand into that of Nicholas, and answered, simply: "Yes, I will go."

"Soon?"

"Oh yes." The reply had a weary tone. "Yes. I will go to-day."

Rubinstein nodded with satisfaction. His self-imposed mission was accomplished. A moment later, after a close hand-clasp, he was gone.

It was the first Wednesday of the new year. For the past three months Ivan, who had been on a distant coun-

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try estate, engrossed in his father's affairs, had heard nothing of the gossip of Moscow. Two days after his return, Nicholas came to him with the story of Joseph's disgrace and disaster; the tale over which the malignant city was now holding its sides with amusement. Ivan, sick with amazement and regret, had promised his old friend to seek the young fool out and—and what? Remonstrate—with madness? Right, in an hour or two, a situation that was the climax of months of wrong? Impossible! All Ivan's instincts rebelled against the idea. Nevertheless, as Nicholas had clearly pointed out, something must be done. Yet who but he, Joseph's first friend in Russia, had the faintest chance of success: of once more setting those purposeless feet on the upward path?—Thus, in the end, with his mood an indecisive mixture of pity and revolt, Ivan prepared himself for the necessary visit.

Nicholas and he had been lunching together in the Gregoriev palace. The brief midwinter day was still bright when the Prince's sleigh set its owner down in the Academy Quarter, a door or two away from the tall house in which Joseph still retained his rooms. Ivan knew his way well enough; but he stood in the empty hall before the closed door for some seconds before he could bring himself to knock, so strong was his feeling of impotence, his dread of intruding into these two, alien lives. At length, stifling his thoughts, he hastily clacked the brass knocker of the door.

A moment. Then came the sound of a woman's voice, muffled, but startlingly familiar:

"C'est toi, Joseph?"

Instantly, all the blood in Ivan's body rushed to his brain. Then, fiercely seizing the door, he thrust it open, strode into the studio, and found himself face to face with Irina Petrovna.

Irina was garbed very much *en negligée*; but Ivan's

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profound amazement, (by some freak of chance the woman's name had never been mentioned to him) for a few seconds prevented his noticing that she was standing beside a trunk half filled with her own garments, more of which were scattered about the room. Looking from her dishevelled figure to the box, the significance of her evident occupation was suddenly borne in upon him.

The question which had risen to his lips was prevented by the woman's exclamation, made in a voice whose usual velvet tones—how long familiar to him!—were now broken and harsh and strained by her palpable emotion:

“*You* here, Ivan!—*You*!”

He raised his eyes to hers, looking her calmly in the face; for, suddenly, by her confusion, his self-control had returned to him, and he felt his power. “Yes, Irina; I have come for a special purpose. But—you—” he looked doubtfully from her to the trunk, “you—and Joseph—are leaving this house?”

“No!—Ah, wait, wait, I will tell you!—Will you sit down?”

Ivan turned to obey her, and, an instant later, found himself alone. Irina had disappeared into the adjoining bedroom, whence she emerged, in a very short space of time, clad in a tea-gown that bore the air—and the name—of the greatest of Parisian *couturières*. Her appearance corresponded with the garment; for Irina's dramatic instinct for effect was unfailing; and, penniless and debt-laden though she was, no Duchesse of St.-Germain could have surpassed her now in beauty and in *chic*.

As she entered the room and seated herself on the couch with a manner and a smile that affected him powerfully, a great discouragement came upon the man. He was here on man's business: to fight with a

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weak man against that man's weakness. How was he to cope with a woman: and, above all, such a woman as this?

As the question passed through his mind, Irina herself answered it:

"Eh bien, Monsieur le Prince, you have come, I am sure, to help that poor Joseph! Is it not so?—Let us forget the acquaintance which we have had, you and I. Let us speak of that little one who, in his heart, worships you, monsieur, though you have not come to him. Well, you hear of his debts? of his disgrace? his fever for play?—So, at last, you yield: you come!—Good!—You find me here. I embarrass you. Néanmoins, I tell you, monsieur, that I, also, in my way—I, who have so hurt him, pauvre enfant! am at last wishful for his repentance and recovery.

"You have asked me if *we*, *Joseph et moi*, were leaving this place. I tell you no. *I* am leaving it. *I!* To-night, when that boy comes back from the 'Masque,' he shall find himself once more unencumbered.—Well, I have allowed myself the luxury of explanation with you. But now I must finish—*that*, and go."

"And where do you go, Irina Petrovna?" inquired Ivan, in the deep, calm voice that suddenly bereft the woman of all her easy impertinence.

Unquestionably, she flushed. "Do not ask me. There is a refuge that is mine for the asking—"

"Ah!—Well, about Joseph. I have been listening to his story as told by a man—my friend. But I wish also to hear it from you, who know it all.—How was it that you met?—And what has become of his real work: of his talent?"

Irina did not immediately reply. Picking a small, gold case from a heap of baubles at her side, she drew therefrom a cigarette, lighted it, with that innate coquetry that was her bane, and believed that Ivan did

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not see how the match trembled. After three puffs she suddenly turned her great eyes on the man, and smiled, joyously:

"You embarrassed me, monsieur! Of my meeting with Joseph, of our life here, I shall say nothing. His—fall, you may impute to me, wholly. And yet—and yet, Ivan, in the face of all I have done, I still say to you, Joseph's own weakness would have killed him in the end.—You, who are a great artist, who have labored through poverty, through injustice, through calumny, through the jealousy of friends and the libel of enemies, and have conquered them all, you know well in your heart that great ignorance, great vanity, great self-indulgence, belong not to the characters of the truly great.—Oh I, I, Irina, the outcast, know that well! Did I tempt *you*?—Those traits were Joseph's. I, who have loved him, say it. For love of me and of himself, he degraded his art. For himself, he has played and played and played, at the 'Masque,' till even I bade him stop.—Roulette—baccarat—trente et quarante:—all he has, is gone; and he has borrowed again and again from every one.—Oh bah! You, mon Prince, can do nothing with or for him. Leave these rooms. Return to your beautiful, calm life. This is not for you.—And as for me"—she suddenly flung the cigarette away and leaped to her feet—"I, also, am going!" And, throwing herself down beside the trunk, she began to stuff the litter of the room into its capacious trays.

In the dim light, Ivan saw not the unsteadiness of her hand; nor knew that her heart was throbbing, wildly; nor that she was fighting back an impulse to crawl to him, miserably, on hands and knees, and beg for the generosity of his great heart.

No, Ivan suspected nothing. He merely sat, rigid, silent, white-faced, tossing aside stub after stub of cigarettes, and gazing, vacantly, into the spaces of past

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and future, trying to reconstruct the broken life of that starving boy whom he once had fed.

The trunk was packed, and locked. Ivan did not look up. Not, indeed, until a tall woman, in a severely-cut cloth costume, entered the studio from the inner chamber bearing with her a lighted lamp, did he come back to himself, and offer to help her into the fur coat that hung over one arm.

This act of courtesy accomplished, Ivan mechanically held out his hand. "You are leaving now?"

"Yes."

"I shall wait here for—him. Do you know when he will come?"

"By seven, probably. We usually dine at that hour."

"Thank you.—Good-bye."

"Ivan!"—The word was a strange whisper. Ivan started. When his eyes met hers, she was looking at him almost steadily. The next instant she had uttered a hoarse: "Good-bye!" and—was gone.

He returned to his seat, wondering a little about her destination: surmising, indeed, the costly equipage that awaited her in the street, with its two men on the box, and its eager occupant.—Faugh! The reverie was broken by the appearance of a man who came to take away the trunk. Her plans had been well laid. But—suppose, as she had imagined when he entered, *he* had been Joseph, returned early? Well, she had doubtless carried things off high-handedly more than once. Why should she hesitate this time?

Heart-sick, Ivan returned to his seat in the lamp-light. Odd that he should have come hither on this day of crisis! Was it well, or ill, that this was so? Would Joseph, overwhelmed by his loss, prove pliable?—Would his weakness be guided by another's reason?—Who could tell? If strength is always consistent, weakness should be as often incalculable.

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The silent minutes crept along. Ivan, who, in the face of Nicholas' tale, had eaten little luncheon, began to grow faint for food. Seven o'clock had already been rung by the myriad bells of Moscow. Joseph did not come.—The half-hour.—Eight.—Still no Joseph. Well, since he was here Ivan would wait the night through, if necessary. Another hour. The watcher's eyelids grew leaden; a great emptiness, a lonely dread, crept through him. He shivered in the growing chill of the room. At last, a little before ten, there came the sound of shuffling steps in the hall, followed by a fumbling at the door, which presently swung back as Joseph appeared on the threshold and paused, blinking at the light.

It was at this moment that Ivan caught his most memorable glimpse of the young man, white-faced, unshorn, ill-clothed, his eyes bloodshot, his whole person shambling and loose-jointed: his long fingers working, tremulously. After a moment's anxious gaze he said, in a muffled voice:

"Irina!—Here, Irina!—I forgot about supper! I forgot I promised, this time. But you should have seen! Eleven times during the hour, seven came up!—I was playing your number.—How could any one have dreamed—Irina!"

"She is not here," said Ivan, quietly, as he rose.

"What!—Th—Thou!" Joseph straightened, but his jaw fell.

Ivan made no reply. Presently the other shut the door and came forward, peering, eagerly. "Thou!" he muttered again, as if to himself. And then: "Ivan!—I saw him!"—Finally, aloud: "But Irina!—I want Irina, you know."

For answer, Ivan took the broken man by the arm and put him into a chair. Then he said, very gently: "When did you eat last, Joseph?"

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"Eat!" The upturned face, with its varnished eyes, gleamed ghostlike in the yellow light. "This morning I—"

"You've been at the 'Masque' all day?"

"Oh, you see, I—you know she needs a great deal.—Sometimes I—I have hardly enough.—Perhaps, now, Ivan Mikhailovitch, you—would lend—"

"You must have some food, at once," broke in Ivan, harshly.

To his surprise, Joseph suddenly sprang to his feet, crying, angrily: "See here, what the devil are you doing here?—And where is Irina?—I want her! She knows me.—Where has she gone?"

"I don't know."

"Don't—Rot! She's at a restaurant. I'm late.—Well, I'll wait." He stumbled backward into the chair, again; but Ivan stood close before him, his face now as white as Joseph's own.

"Irina is not at a restaurant. She left these rooms early this afternoon, and took her things with her." And, as he spoke, Ivan stiffened his every muscle, and instinctively clinched his hands.

For the moment, Joseph stared, stupidly. Then, all at once, he was up and at Ivan, lurching forward upon him, clutching, impotently, at his throat, breathing gutturally, while he uttered inarticulate syllables in the tongue of a serf.

Ivan, even in his disgust at this revelation of the man's lowest self, his unquestionable bad blood, held him off, easily. In a moment or two, indeed, he had the half-drunken, wholly exhausted creature back in his chair, panting and helpless.

Even now, it seemed, Joseph could meet his eyes. A long look passed between them, and Ivan perceived that the painter had come enough to himself to try to analyze his position. He was, however, wholly unpre-

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pared when the fellow sprang at him again, this time with a wild shriek:

"Ah! You devil!—You devil!—It was you, you who have taken her from me!—My God!—*You!*"

"Kashkarin, listen!—Be silent.—You can't hurt me.—Listen!"

There was too much quiet mastery in that voice for disobedience. Joseph became suddenly quiet.

"I came here this afternoon to see what was to be done for you. When I arrived, Mademoiselle Patrovna was on the point of departure. She was well aware that you were being ruined through her; and so she left you. She told me she should be cared for.—There is some one else. I let her go, gladly, knowing it to be well for you. And now—"

The interruption this time was a burst of furious laughter, so loud, so fierce, that Ivan was appalled. Joseph, it seemed, had become a demon. When at last he spoke, it was only to repeat some of Ivan's words: "Aware she was ruining me!—*Was!*—Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha!—And you believed it '*well*' for me!—'*Well!*'—Ah-ha-ha-ha!—Thou hast wit, Ivan!"

Ivan's eyes, piercing the hideous mask that hid an agony, softened. He went impulsively forward, clasping Joseph's frail body in his own, strong arms. "Joseph, I do not mock you. I helped you once. You know that. Trust me again, then. You are not ruined. I have enough to pay your debts, ten times over. Leave the matter to me. Come to my house. There you shall rest, and wait for the strength that seems gone. With me it shall come back to you, the old beauty, the old power of art—"

Again was Joseph seized in the grasp of his haunting devils. Extricating himself violently from the kindly clasp, he turned away from Ivan and stood for a moment mute. When he again faced round, his face was all but

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irrecognizable. And through the tirade that followed, this demoniac look grew more and more horrible, till Ivan felt himself overwhelmed: as much by Joseph's appearance as by his words. For the moment, the man was beyond sanity. And from the depths of his bemired soul poured fragments of that understanding that still remained to him:

• "Art!—Art.—You once preached it to me, starving. Art; purity; earnestness; sincerity:—the artist-angel you described for me! And now to me you say 'rest,' and 'wait!' Rest, for me, the accursed? Wait, to me, devil-ridden? I have descended, of my own free will, into hell. For five months I have wallowed there. Art and my soul I sold for the dirt they would buy. They are gone. Can you buy them back? or the decency, honesty, cleanliness, *youth*, I pawned, for filth and more filth? I am saturated with it. I reek with it. It embraces me with octopus arms. Every kopeck, every rouble, has gone to tighten that embrace. It is not to be loosened. I am hell-bound for eternity. And you speak to me of *art*!"

"Leave me, Ivan Gregoriev, to my own. You can never know me. I hate you now. Irina has gone away. Having brought me to this, I disgust her!—Go thou, then, clean body, clean hands, clean heart!—Ach! I hate—hate—*hate*!"

"And there sits my devil—clothed in the scarlet.—Look on her! Look! Look, for the last time, before I pay her her wage of destruction!—So!—There!—And there!—And there!"

It was the canvas containing his first portrait of Irina. Seizing a palette-knife from a neighboring tray of brushes and paints, he stabbed thrice into the canvas, ripping the picture, wickedly, from top to bottom, from side to side.

"Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha! You see her?—I damn her there

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as she has damned me!—Now you have heard my love, Ivan Mikhailovitch! Now you know!—Go, then, out at that door, carrying your knowledge of me into the wide world.—Take care!—Take care!—It is not only pictures I can kill!—You don't know me yet, I tell you.—Go, I command you! Go!—Go!”

Seizing Ivan's coat and cap from the chair on which they lay, Joseph flung them into their owner's arms. Then for the last time the two faced each other, the sane man gazing earnestly into the other's blazing eyes. Evidently Ivan reached his decision in that look; for, without more ado, he donned his fur garments, and then, without a word, left the room.

It was barely half-past eight o'clock next morning when Ivan remounted the stairs leading to Joseph's rooms, expecting to find the madman sunk in the sleep of exhaustion. He found the door unlocked, and the room—empty. Joseph was gone:—out into Moscow, into the cruelty of the frozen city, penniless, friendless, perhaps still mad! Nor did he ever reappear, in any of his old haunts. Search proved fruitless. Irina had done her work thoroughly. Every effort failed to bring the wanderer up out of the dark unknown. Ivan, bitterly rebelling, tried, in his heart, to hope that that distant Polish hut of his youth knew him again: sheltered, in peaceful dissolution, one of the great talents of the age.

CHAPTER XX

MADAME FÉODOREFF

It may be said that it was not until after the ending of Joseph's weak tragedy that Ivan passed into his third, and final, mental stage. As a boy, he had known very intimately the inner buoyancy of youth, hope, and faith in the joy of life. After the marriage of Nathalie, and his subsequent precipitation, had come those wild rebellions of the soul, the violent protestations, the young and petted cynicisms, that are the inevitable accompaniment of the inevitable hour of disenchantment. This phase, however great its length, must, nevertheless, resolve itself at last into one of two others: the quiet complacency of a renewed but gentler optimism; or a cynicism tried, real, deep-rooted, unhappy but irresistible. Be this state a sign of weakness or of strength, it was the one to which Ivan felt himself driven, willy-nilly, by all the force of his experience. From that doubt of complete disillusion, that confusion of thought and loss of all happy confidence which is one of the results of the long-continued bread-struggle wherein disinterested philosophy can have no part, Ivan had moved, by insensible stages, far into the kingdom of the unredeemable pessimist.

To him, looking ruefully back along the years of his man-struggle, it seemed as if each trial, each disappointment, had been built on a variation of a single theme. Of the several friendships that had been his, all, after running an uncertain course, had come to violent or

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unhappy ends. And in the grave of each was buried a little and a little more of his natural faith and optimism. And yet—not all! One friendship, the first, had lapsed naturally, through separation. Indeed, Ivan still sometimes heard from the companion of his first Petersburg days—Vladimir de Windt. Had there, however, been no letters, he could still always have followed his comrade's track; for de Windt—having left the army many years since, to enter on a diplomatic career, had been climbing, steadily, and was already, at thirty-five, on the threshold of the Council chamber. Over this fact Ivan could unfeignedly rejoice; for already Russia, high and low, was discussing the merits and the probable future of this young man.

But of the others,—that group of men, the two women, who had sat at the door of his soul's sanctuary—what of them? Nathalie, first: then Zarembo, Anton Rubinstein, Laroche his comrade of the Conservatoire, Ostrovsky his collaborator, Balakirev, Merelli, Joseph, finally, Irina,—her soul still flaunting its rags before the gaze of the world, while her brother and those student companions of her honest days and Ivan's first success, labored in distant prison-mines, self-victims of unsuccessful treason: what of these? Which one remained to him?—Ah! there were two: old Nicholas, the unswerving, the devoted; and Kashkine, who owed him nothing, who had given—was to give—so much! Why was it that they counted so lightly in the scales against these others? Who can say? who explain that perverseness of human nature which will not value what it has, but must drop it by the way to stretch out unavailing hands for the fleeting ungraspable? This, certainly, was what Ivan did; and his face came in time so to show the bitterness of his heart, that Joseph, rising stealthily from his unknown depth, dreaming of finding help from his once benefactor, twice beheld the depth of Ivan's ha-

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bitual frown, and stole away without making appeal to the heart-hungry man who now, year by year, labored alone in his desolate palace.

The years of 1873, 1874, and 1875 passed slowly, bringing rich harvest of Ivan's great gift to the music-world of Europe. Russia only would have none of him; wherefore he, deeply resentful, held every individual of his race at bay, until, at length, an incident, dreamed of long ago but also long since despaired of, broke successfully into a solitude that was becoming dangerous.

On Wednesday October 15th, in the last-named year, Ivan, book in hand, sat idling over his *déjeuner*, when gray-headed Piotr entered, quivering with excitement, to announce that a great lady waited in the drawing-room and would not be denied a sight of His Excellency. So, three minutes later, Ivan found himself face to face with the secret lady of his heart.

"Nathalie!—Princess!"

"'Nathalie,' please, dear cousin.—Ivan, I am in great trouble, and I have come to you for help."

"Help!—Trouble!" Ivan's low voice faltered. "Ah!—Can I make it right for you?"

The woman before him shook her head, sadly. "No one can ever make it right, Ivan."

"What is it, Nathalie?" In his secret mind, he was just murmuring her name, over and over again, and blessing the woe that had brought her to him.

"For the present I am here, in Moscow; and my children are with me.—I might have sent for you sooner, by note, Ivan. I *ought*, I suppose. But I waited too long, and so came myself!" And she looked at him, her lips smiling, her troubled eyes full of anxiety.

Even after all the years, Ivan read her well enough not to answer that smile. Instead, he led her, scarcely protesting, into the dining-room; despatched the amazed but delighted Piotr for fresh tea and something to eat;

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and, when they were alone, sat for a moment lost in contemplation of her, while she waited, wearily, for him to pick up the thread of their talk.

Her appearance, charming to any other man, startled and momentarily saddened Ivan. He marvelled, indeed, at the emotion roused in him by her face: the face that he had pictured as forever changeless, but which, he now perceived, time had dealt with more cruelly than with his own. Madame Féodoreff was, indeed, a woman sufficiently beautiful, sufficiently distinguished, to be looked at thrice in any assemblage. Yet her every feature, the exquisite, pearly skin, most of all the once sparkling, now deeply-seeing eyes, spoke of a long and difficult drama of life.

These things passed through his mind as he gave his order and Piotr left the room. For some moments more he was silent. Then, rousing himself, almost unwillingly, from his contemplation, he spoke.

"You should be able to guess, Nathalie, how much your coming means: how deeply it touches me. To think that you should still have confidence!—How many years is it since the winter of your début?"

Though he asked it lightly, he saw the shiver that ran over the woman at his side. "We must not count years," she said, softly. "Indeed, Ivan, now that I am here, I find it hard to explain my idea in coming.—I am alone in Moscow—virtually hiding. And I can tell you very little of my reason.—Still, you can guess, at least, that my marriage—has been—unsuccessful.—I have my children. I adore them; yet I have left their father, and so injured them forever.—That is about all I can tell you.—Up—"

"Princess, I beg of you!—"

"No, let me finish, Ivan! Up to the time of my mother's death, I never wholly realized the truth of affairs.—She managed, somehow, to shield me.—During

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her last years, Ivan, she regretted my marriage more than any act of her life.—Indeed, I think it was the one thoroughly cruel thing she ever did.—Since she went, I have been forced to understand: to face black truth. And so, when the time came that even my babies were beginning to ask me questions about—incidents—and—and persons who frequented *my house*, I *had* to come away. I know how the world regards a runaway wife; yet I believe that I am not universally blamed. I hope not. But, just now, it is impossible for me to face the world. I have been alone for some weeks. I came to you to-day just for—just for companionship, I suppose.”

As she paused, Ivan leaned forward and impetuously took her delicately gloved hand into his firm clasp. But the light that glowed in his eyes, he wisely managed to conceal. “‘Companionship,’ Nathalie?—Let us give it a better term: ‘Friendship!’ Surely that is permissible now, between us. Believe me, anything that a man can do, I will do for you. You have told me far more than I should have asked.—I can never take the place of—of Madame Dravikine. But I can make you feel, perhaps, that the world is not utterly lonely for you: that there is some one who is made happier and better by your mere living presence.”

Towards the end, his tone had become slightly uncertain; and Madame Féodoreff, who was prepared for an emergency, and whose schooling in the world had been thorough, hastily interposed. Moreover, as she began to speak, old Piotr entered with an extemporaneous luncheon that did credit to a purely bachelor establishment. As he set the things down before the unexpected visitor, she, looking her host squarely in the eye, and with a manner friendly but quite without sentiment, observed: “You understand very nicely, Ivan! That, without knowing it, was precisely what I came to say.

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Friendship!—It is something that has never yet entered my life: very probably through my own fault.”

Ivan's answer was a smile; for he had no special wish to take advantage of this opening for banalities. While the Princess ate, therefore, he played with his knife and fork, and they bandied the necessary phrases of conventionality while the thoughts of both were busy with intimate matters. Already Ivan, high-hearted, knew that the long-worshipped image of the young Nathalie was gone, forever, from the chapel of his mind; and that, already, in the empty niche, stood the shadow of another form: one less fairy-like, less bewitching; but more suited to the reverence of reason, and worthier of the homage he found himself still so ready to outpour.

Indeed that first visit, self-restrained, brief, uneventful as it was, proved more momentous to both man and woman than either, beforehand, would have dreamed possible. Their early passion for each other both believed to lie buried deep beneath the weight of years of separation and difference of occupation and environment. Vanity! The first hour of real reunion showed them both that the old feeling had been far from dead: was, in truth, sleeping so lightly that a touch must rouse it again. Four hours after Nathalie's departure, Ivan found himself at the piano, pouring out his heart in such a burden of passionate melody as had rarely rushed from him, even in his moments of inspiration. And the long hours of the sleepless night served absolutely to loosen the fetters of his self-repression; for in the growing glory of the dawn, he watched also the glorious resurrection of the one great love of his life. Again, after many years, she lived in him: in every thought and hope and dream; not now as a child, potent, through ignorance, to wound him past endurance; but as a woman, beautiful through time and sorrow, magnificent in the wreck of her woman's life. Still he knew well

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that if love was to be his, it must remain for a long time under the guise of friendship. What he did not acknowledge to himself, was the fact that all the world was to share something of this great and painful joy. He was still ruthless in the service of his single god. And this love, like every other factor of his life, must serve as food for his genius. It was Nathalie who had unconsciously turned him, protesting, to his work. It was to be through her also that he reached the height of his career: his perfection of maturity. For she was the inspiration of the "Tosca Symphony."

If Ivan had suddenly risen from the depths to the heights, the cause of his change was also to know powerful emotion on his behalf. In the days of her far-away youth, Nathalie Dravikine's affection for her cousin had been as strong as any her school-girl nature was capable of. But when, after her hurried and loveless marriage, she was forced into a revulsion of exquisite misery, to a breadth of pain and repression that forced her naturally light nature into incredible development, the comparatively petty grief of Ivan's loss was forgotten. News of his disgrace reached her months after the fact, and but a few weeks before the birth of her first child, —now long since dead. And in her then morbid and unnatural condition, she had peevishly brushed all thought of her cousin aside, accounting his unhappiness as small beside her own.

Many years later, when the long period of her bitter schooling had moulded her into something far finer than her youth had promised; when, also, she had brought the art of concealment to its height of perfection; the memory of her lost cousin's gallant and loyal devotion recurred to her, together with the surmise that she had been the cause of his dismissal from the army, and the still more amazing fact that he was now beginning to be recognized as an incalculable power in the world of

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music. An interview with Vladimir de Windt confirmed her first belief; a symphony concert at the Conservatoire hall, fixed the second. And then, suddenly, she discovered that the man who had sought ruin because of her loss, and who had risen, pedestalled, from that ruin to another and a greater personality, had won a place in her heart from which he was not to be driven.

For many years, now, his spoken name had never failed to stir her secretly. Though, in the ordinary sense of the word, she was hardly musical, her emotional nature had been too fully developed for her not to recognize the power that breathed through Ivan's tempestuous or fairy-like compositions. She began to make his work her peculiar study; and never a phrase of it but touched her deeply, strangely; in spite of which, *mondaine* that she must always be, it was not till she heard that he had inherited the title and wealth of his father, that she began sentimentally to exalt her undefined feeling for him.

Certainly, had it not been for his present social status, Nathalie Féodoreff, even in the desolation that had followed the tragic climax of her years of married martyrdom, would never have sought that first meeting with her cousin. Yet she was not to be judged upon that fact alone. She was a devoted mother. She had been a faithful wife to a man who had lowered his manhood to a level beneath that of the very beasts. She had borne with him through degradation, insult, once or twice physical violence; and this not only because Russian orthodoxy gives no quarter to a rebellious wife, whatever the provocation. But when that time arrived when her duty to her children and her duty to her wretched husband could no longer be compatible; when the two little girls remaining to her out of five children, began to question the relationship between their governess and their father, Nathalie hesitated no longer. Seiz-

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ing upon one of her husband's frequent absences, she completely dissolved her establishment, told the furious, vile-tongued Frenchwoman quite calmly that her services were no longer necessary; and, that evening, with her children, two servants, and her personal effects, disappeared, absolutely, beyond the ken of Prince or police.

- In Moscow she took a small apartment, in a quiet quarter of the city; and there, masking her unhappiness behind an habitual languor, strove heroically to readjust herself to life. Finally, as the result of a momentary, rebellious impulse, the period of her friendship with Ivan began. Neither of the two had been quite prepared for the after-effects of their first quiet and commonplace meeting. Nevertheless when, on the following Sunday, Ivan's card was brought to her in her little *salon*, he was not refused. His cousin greeted him placidly, and he made speedy friends with the two quaint children whom he found with her, and who served thenceforward to keep the facts of her existence always in evidence; but who could not, unfortunately, prevent the existence of secret emotions, either in their mother or in the beloved new "uncle" who proved such a mine of sweetmeats and toys.

After Ivan's first call, Nathalie found herself grappling with the question as to whether he must be absolutely dismissed, or merely held at arm's-length. Into this discussion pride entered so largely that she presently determined to do neither thing; but to conceal her own impotence beneath an armor of cousinliness. Thenceforth Ivan found himself, at first to his delight, later to his baffled chagrin, treated with an informal friendliness, a guileless intimacy, that perfectly answered its designer's purpose, though the helpless recipient chafed, rebelled, stayed away, suffered agonies of jealous rage, and finally, one blustery day, presented himself again

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in the *Gagarinesky*, wrapped in a manner impenetrably suave and bland. He had read her at last; and was satisfied. Thus, their companionship entered upon its best period. Intellectually it was perfect. Sentimentally, though decorum was never transgressed, there came for each certain minutes of unavoidable revelation that were eminently satisfactory to the other. And in time their intimacy reached a point where Ivan began actually to confide musically in her:—a woman!

The twilight hours which he spent at the piano in her *salon*, while she listened dreamily to his interpretations or improvisation, were the finest they knew; and wrought a beautiful pediment for their temple to Amicitia. The difference in their natures served for each as a stimulant. To Ivan, her sympathetic comments, frequent praise, rare criticism, lacked absolutely nothing. Nathalie early perceived that she was beholding a genius at work: a giant engaged upon labor too stupendous for irreverent contemplation. And from him and his music she gained the medicine her bruised heart and broken nerves most needed. For Ivan, in the growth of his great love for her, unconsciously brewed an elixir of power from which each drank, daily. So, by unavoidable degrees, both were led unconsciously into a land from which few can emerge still solitary. Yet that was what the gods eventually decreed for this hapless twain.

The semi-religious festival of Christmas passed; and New Year's, the real holiday of Europe, had arrived. Ivan, who had spent a week and sums incredible, over gifts for the small Sophia and Katrisha, determined also, at the last moment, on his present for Nathalie, and then passed New Year's eve alone in his own palace, in sleepless cogitation.

Long before this time he realized that all the passion of his youth had been renewed and increased a hundredfold: that he loved the Princess Féodoreff as he

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had never loved Nathalie Dravikine. He was ready, nay, mad, to lay himself at her feet. He dreamed, by day and by night, of the only feasible release for her: civil divorce; to be followed, as speedily as might be, by a marriage of the same type with him. Alexis Féodoreff, he was convinced, would readily consent to this release; and would offer no opposition to her plea. So far, all was easy enough. But Nathalie: what of her? Had *she* considered the subject? How devoutly orthodox was she? Had she divined his heart? Was her kindness directed towards this possible end? Finally, dared he speak, on the morrow, when so excellent an opening would be made by his gift to her: a diamond heart containing one priceless ruby in its centre?—Should he, by daring, win to heaven? or should he be considered a libertine, and so thrust back to the dull purgatory whence he had so lately risen to her? Better risk nothing than lose all!—Whereby it may be seen that Ivan's blood had cooled a little in the past fifteen years.

Throughout the night he fluctuated; and morning found him still in haggard doubt, hardly lessened when, at a most informal hour, he presented himself at the house in the *Gagarinesky*, where, from the *concierge*, he gained the first hint of trouble. The old woman informed him that, in the night, a message had arrived for madame up-stairs. Madame's maid had finally taken it in; and Yekaterina learned, at the delivery of the morning milk, that the news had been very serious; and that madame must shortly leave Moscow.—Whereupon the beginning of lamentations and curiosities—and Ivan out of earshot, flying up the two flights of stairs which led to the lady of his desire.

Ivan Veliki had sounded the first stroke of the tenth hour when Prince Gregoriev knocked upon his cousin's door; and the tenth vibration had not yet died upon

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the air when he paused in the doorway of the drawing-room.

Nathalie sat in the jut of the room, her back to the row of windows. The heavy coronal of dark braids was piled above her white face with all its usual, exquisite care. The transparent delicacy of her complexion was accentuated by her gown, which was of black, unrelieved save by a little line of white at the throat. In her lap lay two or three envelopes, an open telegram, and some legal-looking, red-sealed papers.

Ivan gazed at the picture she made without speaking: his heart trembling in his throat. In a moment or two, however, she lifted her eyes to his, and, without rising, motioned him to come closer. He went, at once, lifted her cold hand and kissed it, his holiday greetings long since forgotten. After a moment's gaze into her set face, he said, gently:

"You are in trouble, Nathalie *mia*?"

"Yes, Ivan.—No, Ivan!—I do not know. I cannot think at all, yet.—Alexei Alexandrovitch is dead," she replied, rapidly, and without expression.

At the last words, Ivan felt himself struck as by an inward blow. He started, violently, and echoed: "Dead!—Alexis dead!—Then, Nathalie, you—"

"I am widowed."

"You are free!"

Their words were uttered almost simultaneously. Then followed a silence, pregnant, surcharged; on Ivan's part almost unpermissible. The Princess Féodoreff lifted one hand to her brow and let it fall again. Ivan turned and began rapidly to pace the room. The thing was so utterly unexpected, so entirely the one event that he had felt could never come about, that he was as one dumb. The woman, watching him, dulled though her mind was by the shock, divined, instinctively, something of his state of thought. Woman though she was,

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however, she was unprepared for his first action, which, as it were, threw a search-light upon the sole idea into which the confusion eventually resolved itself.

Ceasing his walk he went swiftly to her, took her two hands, drew them protectively to his breast, and said, huskily: "You are in great trouble, Nathalie.—You are unhappy.—Is it—tell me!—is it grief for *him*?"

Before the clearness of his look, her own went down. A faint color crept into her cheeks. For one moment she hesitated; but finally rose to his own height of honesty.

"No, Ivan, I cannot grieve for the man who deliberately wrecked my youth, debased my thoughts, lowered me for years in my own eyes.—Do you expect it?—It seems to me that, just now, I am feeling nothing. But I know already that I am *going* to suffer.—I shall suffer remorse! I, who have been so proud of my long forbearance, shall suffer for these last weeks as if I had left him years ago, without provocation!—He is dead; and I was not with him at the end.—He died in his bed.—They tell me it was his heart. He had had trouble with it before, and they had warned him against dissipation; for he was an old man.—But he heeded no one.—And he asked for me, at the end, and I was not there!—*That* is what I shall suffer for. After all those long years of enduring, I left him to die alone.—Alone: my husband!"

"Nathalie!"

The Princess started at the note of agony in Ivan's voice.

"Nathalie! You are not to suffer for that brute:—that brute who drove you here—drove you to me!" Still retaining the two hands, which she had not tried to make him relinquish, he suddenly sank upon one knee before her, so bringing his head nearly on a level with her own. Then, oblivious of all things else, he began to pour out his heart to her: "Nathalie, that first

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time, years ago, that you came to Moscow—the time of my mother's death, I forgot my heart-break over her, in you. Even then I loved you, utterly. You were the angel of all my wretched cadet days. Then, years later, when I came to know you a little, my love became the passion of a young man, and it finally swept me into a gulf of desolation. But no wrong could really come through you; and what then seemed ruin, showed itself, in the end, the opportunity of my life. It drove me to what I could not have done alone. Through you I found my work.

“That is long ago, Nathalie; and I am not a young man now. But in all my life there has been only one woman.—That fact came to me forcibly in that first hour of your first visit to me here: the beginning of our thrice-blessed companionship.

“That beautiful dream is ended, now. No doubt, for a time, you must leave this place. But it is insulting neither you nor the dishonored dead whose wife you have not been for years, to tell you what you know: that you carry away with you my soul!—Nathalie, Princess of all my life, will you not set forth leaving behind you the promise to come back?—You shall wait as long as you will: two years, if it must be. I have endured far longer than that, and without hope.—Only let there be between us the dear knowledge that, in time, you are to accept for a husband the man whose life shall thenceforward be at your least command!”

His speech had been too rapid for interruption; and yet both voice and manner were quiet and restrained. His every word was spoken with the simplicity of unconscious ardor. And only from his eyes, which burned her, and the almost painful clasping of her hands, could the Princess surmise his emotion.

Perhaps, had it been feasible, she would have stopped his speech. But, somehow, he had compelled a hearing.

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And nothing he had said either shocked or repelled her. Yet she was enough affected by the death of the man who had done her every despite, but who had, nevertheless, taught her the mystery of life and given her her children, to be distressed at this proposal in the first hours of her widowhood.

Gently she put Ivan from her, and rose, moving towards the window, before which she stood, gazing down into the white street, while Ivan waited, trembling with emotion. When she turned to him again, she had replaced the chains upon her feelings.

"This afternoon I am leaving for Petersburg," she said. "I must carry your words away with me.—My impulse is to reject, instantly, every suggestion of such a thing.—But your companionship in these last weeks has meant for me more than I can tell you now; and, in my empty home in Petersburg, I shall carefully consider the honor you have done me.—Yes, dear Ivan, it is an honor from any man; and from you a very great one. The woman whom you married would be fortunate, I know. But—I can only promise to write you, soon. Believe me, you shall not wait longer than I can help. This is fair, I think.

"And now, I can give you no more time to-day.—No, you can do nothing, thank you. Léonie for me, old Kásha for the children—they do everything.—We leave the Petersburg station at five. Come then, if you will, to say good-bye to the little girls. Our *au revoir* must be here."

"*Au revoir!*" echoed Ivan, his voice gleaming.

Madame Féodoreff smiled, rather sadly. "Ah, Ivan, whatever my answer to you, tell me that I shall have your friendship still! It is the most precious thing that is left me, excepting my children. I cannot afford to lose you as my friend.—Promise!" and she held out her hand.

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He took it, quietly. "I promise, dear lady of my life."

"Then, again—au revoir!"

"But soon.—*Soon!*"

He was gone; but, though she yielded to her impulse and ran to the window to look after him, he walked away without once turning his head.

That night, when he returned alone to his empty house, after bidding his world good-bye at the Petersburg station, he perceived at once that the Moscow around him was but a wilderness, and his great palace a prison. Thenceforward he was to exist only in the consciousness of waiting: his faith in her promise that she would torture him not a moment longer than she must. But, as the days passed, logic, calm, even reason, forsook him, till no lover of twenty-one was ever in sorer plight than he. Truly Nathalie herself could hardly have guessed the depths to which she had plunged this quiet and self-centred man. She had, nevertheless, the consideration to keep her word. It was but eleven days after her departure, nine after the funeral of her husband, before Ivan found himself shut alone into that room where she had first greeted him, holding her answer in his visibly trembling hands.—A moment.—A long sigh.—It was open.

"78 KERZONSKAIA, ST. PETERSBURG,

"*Tuesday, January 9th, 11 P.M.*

"DEAR COUSIN:—Since our last talk together in far-away Moscow, the consciousness of you and of your question have been always with me. To-night I have been sitting here, alone in my boudoir, for two hours, trying, desperately, to *think*. I have wished to give myself fair opportunity for finding out my real mind; but, miserable thing that I am! the real *I* will not respond.

"Ivan, my husband has been buried a week and a day! True, for years my tie to him was bondage. I have, to-night, a far tenderer feeling for you than I can remember ever having felt

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for him. Yet, in spite of this, I cannot bid you hope. I am widowed; and the first numbness of the unexpected shock has not left me yet. I can say to you truly, cousin, that I love you: that the comradeship we have known is something which I shall try to continue while we both live: though we are far beyond our twenties now, Ivan. But more than this, more than pure friendship, seems to me impossible. Marriage—even though it be with the love of my girlhood—is still half-terrible to me. I think that certain memories of my existence with Alexis can never be wiped away.

“Am I cruel, dear Ivan? Oh, I so want *not* to be! But, indeed, I think I am not yet wholly myself. So I bid you remember that I have suffered very cruelly from the ‘love’ of a man; and I pray you, for that reason, to try to forgive me when I tell you that friendship is all I can ever want now: that as a friend I shall write you; and as a friend *you* must know,

“Your affectionate, sorrowful,

“NATHALIE D. F.”

There are men, perhaps, who would have read hope into this letter and have clung to it, willy-nilly. Ivan was not of these. Self-deception was never a vice of his; and, from this hour, the soul of Nathalie Féodoreff stood revealed to him more clearly than to herself.

Once through the letter he sat motionless, the black-bordered sheet crushed tightly in his right hand. He had forgotten the paper on which her words to him were traced. Perhaps he had forgotten the words themselves. But the throbbing of his heart continued: the veins in his temples still stood out, like purple whip-cords. It was late in the night before there appeared, in the dark room, the vision of his mother’s angel-face gazing at him, her clear eyes filled with mingled love and understanding; and midnight had long struck before that which he instinctively expected was finally given: when, like a diapason, crashing, *fortissimo*, through the dark, rolled the magnificent, despairing chords of the final theme of the great “Tosca Symphony”—the *motif*, the epitome, of his own, dark life.

CHAPTER XXI

TOSCA REGNANT

DURING the weeks immediately succeeding this last repulse, Ivan suffered as he had suffered in the early days of Nathalie's marriage. It was not easy for him to comprehend why Madame Féodoreff's letter should affect him so bitterly. He made all the familiar efforts: tried every resource known to him of old. They failed. Not only had his tranquillity departed; not only had his work been turned from joy to drudgery; not only was the pleasant savor of his quiet existence gone; nay: physically, mentally, he felt himself sick, and in want. His brain played him false. His sleep deserted him. His carefully guarded existence turned upon him, mocking.

Ivan at last began fully to realize what the past three months had done: how, in them, all the old love-bitterness, all the accumulated loneliness and hardship of his solitary years, piled together, had been transmuted into a mighty hope, the destruction of which swept away his carefully-reared edifice of artificial content. Out of all the women in the world, he had wanted, had asked for, in all his life, none but Nathalie. But her he had needed, terribly; and she was gone: gone out of his yearning heart, and arms, and soul—for good!

It was now a long time since he had begun his reign in the house of his fathers: that dreary house of evil name in which pure women had been overcome as by some poison, some miasma of foul living, and, generation

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after generation, had died there, down to his mother's day. This, for more than two centuries had been the tradition of that grewsome palace, till it was famed throughout the city for the sinister line of men who had dwelt therein, and had finally died out with the last Prince. Ivan, when he took up his residence there so suddenly, had put behind him his memories of the old-wife's tales, and his own boyhood experience. This, as he progressed farther and farther along the road of power, had become easier daily until—a woman stepped in, and the power of Prince Ivan faded and died. In the early days of his disappointment, he was beset by all the ghosts of his fathers. Himself once more a prey to that black Tosca that is the heritage of every thinking Russian, he yielded without resistance to thoughts and memories as morbid and as dreary as those on which his mother, years ago, had fed her dread disease. So, after a few midwinter weeks of brooding, lassitude, and sleepless fasting, his personal servants, there being no friend at hand to replace them, ventured to remonstrate with their master. Piotr was now as much his devoted slave as was old Sóssha, who had recently retired from active duty to the kitchen-corner, where his reminiscences and his pipe-smoke together flavored that cheery room. Sóssha had no hesitation in taking Piotr's lead, and begging the master either to bring home company to amuse him, or to change his abode to some more fashionable quarter of the city, whither all his dependants would happily follow him.

To these simple appeals Ivan listened, certainly; but, bound down by that cruel lassitude which is the direst symptom of chronic melancholy, he refused every suggestion, and left his servants to return to their quarters, dismally shaking their gray heads over his mental state.

So through the winter. But the flowing of spring-tide rouses the dullest to contemplate some possible

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change of routine. And when that blessed season once more breathed upon White Russia, Ivan woke to the memory of old desire. From his mother, who, as a girl, had run wild over the huge Blashkov estates, Ivan inherited that intense love of nature without which an artist must be always maimed. This year, especially, he found himself daily dreaming of the perfumed nights and sweet-aired days of the country of his boyhood: his mother's favorite resort, at Klin, whither she had been wont to convey him in May, and whence she departed, tearfully, under heavy pressure, in October; though twice in her life she had managed to spend the greater part of the winter there, in the white wilderness hateful to her lord. "Maidonovo" was a moderate-sized house, set in the midst of twenty acres of land situated a half-mile from the extremity of the village of Klin. A year after his wife's death Michael Gregoriev had sold the place, which he had always detested. Of it Ivan now dreamed, incessantly; till, late in April, he entered into negotiations that were presently to electrify his household and that part of Moscow's population with whom he figured as something of a personage.

It was the twenty-eighth of the month when Piotr, after a two-hour closeting with his master, flew to his fellows with astounding news.

The great Gregoriev palace was, in less than a month, to pass out of the hands of the last of the family, and into the possession of the government, by whom it was to be turned over to the Department of Police. Moreover—and Piotr's emphasis on the word brought a sharp stillness in place of the rising buzz of comment—instead of a place in Moscow, Monsieur le Prince had bought his mother's former country-house at Klin, whither he intended to remove immediately, there to pass at least the summer, retaining as many of his present household as cared to remain with him. (Here a smile, at the idea

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of any of the twenty's leaving the service of a bachelor, a lover of solitude and simplicity, who would sooner have struck himself than one of his servants!)—*Finally*, the whole change was to be completed in two or three days; and a week, at the outside, would see the new existence well begun.—Whereupon Piotr, all his news given, descended from his imaginary rostrum, as eager as his fellows to have a voice in the impending discussion.

It is no very rare thing for the Russian May-day to wear an aspect of January. But May snow is, at least, a transient thing; and there are years when the first day of the gentle month is such as no country would repudiate. Nature did honor to her disciple; for the world was a glory of young green and gold, as Ivan, bowed with memories, made his progress out of the present, along the white, country road to the house of the long ago.

Winter had ended ten days before; and Russia, with that marvellous rapidity with which she accomplishes all change, had already risen from snow-sheet and mud-bed, and stood negligéed in a robe of gauzy-green, all flower-sprigged and sun-flecked. Three days more, and the fruit trees, for which Klin is famous, would be bowers of pink and white. And behind the flying droschky, there actually arose a fine, white film of dust! House doors stood open to the milky air; and Staroste and lonely Village Priest alike were at work in their respective gardens.

Ivan, now emerged from his black, winter mood, was tremulous with emotion; and, as his vehicle left the village behind, his eyes ranged over the broad countryside, reading, as in a familiar book, each old, beloved character printed on the open page of the landscape seen last during the summer he had spent here alone, after his mother's death.

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When Ivan alighted at his own gate, Sóssha stood there to welcome him and take upon himself the customary haggle with the driver. Nor did the old man, noting his master's face, so much as address a word to him whose expression he read with the sagacity of one trained to the task. Hence Ivan, his heart overflowing, went at his own, lingering gait towards that open doorway wherein, it seemed, Sophia's slender form must presently appear.

He entered the house alone, turning at once into the little morning-room, where he looked vaguely about for his mother's tambour-frame which was not in its place beside the window. Hither, an instant later, came Piotr, announcing, respectfully:

"The large room above has been prepared for your Excellency. The trunks are all unpacked.—At what hour shall I serve the tea—and where?"

Ivan started, looked about him dazedly, and realized that he had not eaten since early morning, though the hour was now past four. Then he said, rather wearily: "Tea here, Piotr, in an hour. After that I will see you and Sóssha. Meantime, let me be left absolutely alone. I want to go over the whole house. See that I meet no one."

"Your Excellency is obeyed." And Piotr had bowed and was gone.

Ivan flung hat, gloves and stick upon the table, and then looked slowly round once more.—Twenty-one years since his mother had gazed on these familiar walls?—Impossible! Two decades of other lives intervening between him and the summer in which sad-eyed Sophia had secretly watched the coming of her hideous Octopus of disease? Nay! He would not let that thought endure. But every trace of intrusion must be put away: if, indeed, it had left a trace. At least the belongings of his mother, now removed, must come back. He should

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dwell here with her beside him, in his heart, always!— But certainly this room, save for the tambour and scattered wools, was quite unchanged: roughly-tinted buff walls, polished floor, with its delicately faded Persian rug, heavy chairs and sofa, ay, the very spindle-legged table near the bay, were all here, forming the old ensemble. It was almost incredible.—But Ivan had discounted the penetration of those servants who, in the long ago, had loved their lady as now they loved her son.

With a heart violently throbbing, a throat painfully knotted under the strain of associations long cherished in the inner sanctum of his memory, Ivan passed slowly through the long, cold drawing-room towards the staircase at its farthest end, and so, slowly, upward. As of old, the slippery stairs were uncarpeted; and his heart jumped anew as his eyes met the thing they sought: a small, round knot-hole, in a corner of the seventh step, which had been filled in with a piece of wood rather darker than the rest, and which, as a boy, he had been possessed to cut out with his knife, only to be inevitably caught at and punished after each attempt.

At the head of the stairs still stood the great, oaken chest, the bottom drawer of which had been dedicated to the use of his most precious toys. That was empty, now. He must not break the spell by opening it. So, with a smile that was an inaudible sigh, he passed on to his mother's bedroom: that room in which, on a New Year's night now thirty-eight years gone by, a lonely wife had prayed God for the boon of motherhood.

The very shrine before which Sophia had knelt, bracket, ikon, and brass candlestick, still hung on the far wall, beside the bed. Ivan's eyes paused at it, and he was seized by the impulse to speak to his mother from that spot. Repressing himself, however, he sat down beside a table on which he leaned an elbow, sup-

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porting his head upon his hand. Presently his eyes drooped shut. The unwonted sweetness of the air, the long, twining sun-shadows of late afternoon, the intense, country stillness, all of them helped the oppression of memory, till gradually he began to feel himself enwrapped in a shimmering, elusive mist of half-real dreams.

He perceived that the windows were fast-shut, double-paned, their cracks stuffed with the customary winter moss. Still the raving wind came through: a freezing breath. Daylight was gone. In its place—was this some pale moonbeam straying through the uncurtained window, to mingle its ghostly light with the flaring yellow flame of the guttering candle?—And that figure that crouched, dumbly, on the floor, beneath the protective ikon? Who was she?—And who the other two who now resolved themselves out of the creeping mist and glided towards the sleeping woman?—a tall and radiant personage, leading by the hand a little child?—It seemed not strange:—neither new nor amazing. Ivan knew the gentle lady who had prayed: knew also the Majestic One who brought the answer to that piteous prayer. But the child—the shadow-shape whose tiny hand was clasped in that of the Divine Woman?—Ah, *that*—

Ivan shuddered, started, and, by a violent effort, flung off the clinging vision. Old Sóssha, standing in the doorway, was saying, in his gentle, plaintive voice:

“The tea, your Excellency!—It is as you commanded. —You have journeyed far and waited long!”

“*Waited!*—I commanded tea in an hour. It can’t be five.”

“Pardon, your Excellency, the bells have rung six.”

Ivan sprang to his feet with an exclamation. Then, suddenly, he swayed, caught himself, by means of the table, and sank back in his chair with a suppressed

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groan. The old servitor ran forward, fear in his face; but Ivan, smiling at him, waved him away:

"It is quite well with me, Sósha.—Go bring the samovar up here:—here, to my mother's room."

So, with less thought of Nathalie in his heart than he had known for many a long day, Ivan began his life at Klin: an existence which, barring one restless interval of travelling, was to continue till the end of material things came for him. He was not yet old in years. The experiences that had been given him were scarcely of a theatrical kind. Those which had gone deepest, and upon which his soul had fed itself, had been scarce visible to the world, could not have been surmised by his closest friends. His scars were the scars of temperament: the result of an abnormal capacity for feeling. The vividness of his imagination heightened petty trials to a semblance of wanton cruelty. Impersonal matters he unconsciously made his own. Echoes of the great *Weldschmerz*, coming to him from the void, vibrated their way through his nature till they emerged again, imprisoned in harmonies of his creating.

This summer, for example, the first that he spent at Klin, brought him scarce one outward incident worthy of note; yet it was to him a time overflowing with events—of mind, and memory. To an outsider or a *mondain*, the Maidonovo routine would have seemed monotonous to a verge of imbecility. Ivan, ghost-haunted, found each minute of each day pregnant with its own suggestion: saw his life as a tapestry, the design of which was woven upon a background of surpassing natural beauty—the climax and gradual *decrecendo* of the year. He had emerged from that long period of semi-idleness in which he had been able to do no more than refine a mass of half-finished work; and was now feeling a fresh joy in a renewed and strong-flowing power; an

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excitement in the evolving of new ideas. September found ready for the printer five new works; the first of them and the biggest, his "Fifth Symphony," the *andante* of which must remain forever unrivalled, while the work as a whole can only be surpassed by its successor in the same form, Ivan's last and greatest creation: the "Tosca Symphony." Beside this he had written the "D-minor Violin Concerto" for Brodsky; the "Liturgy of Joseph of Arimathea," for four voices with organ accompaniment; half a dozen of the melodious songs that were his special delight: and, lastly, the little, one-act opera "Iris," for which he had written both libretto and score, and which created a furore on its performance in Petersburg, the winter after his death.

The months that produced this large amount of work were spent in a depth of solitude such as only Ivan would have dared to undergo. Nathalie's letters, which grew more frequent as the days went by, and to which he faithfully replied; two visits from Kashkine, one from Mily Balakirev, and half a dozen from Nicholas, who was to be daunted by no amount of taciturnity, were the only incidents of the period. Balakirev, indeed, had brought with him a young protégé, one Rimsky-Korsakow, (since heard from,) to worship at the shrine of Russia's Gregoriev; whereupon that hero, highly disgusted, behaved so boorishly that the chagrined Balakirev refused Nicholas' next plea, and would not go again. Ivan's one, regular recreation were his long, solitary walks through the country-side, disturbed only by the clamorings of children, whom he had spoiled with kopecks, and whose chatterings interrupted his thoughts no more than did the voices of squirrels and birds—from which latter, indeed, he got many an idea.

These five-mile walks, with four hours in the morning and two in the evening at the piano, an hour or so spent in skimming over some of the scores in his vast musical

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library, considerable reading, especially at meal-times, of Russian, French and English novelists and the German philosophers, whom he approached worshipfully, formed the occupations of his quiet life during many years. And, as the first months passed, he began to realize that his painfully acquired philosophy of living was demonstrating its practicability in the many volumes of his daily journal.

No artist, nor, indeed, any scholar or original thinker of temperament, can progress far in his chosen work without acquiring a certain philosophic attitude of his own that makes for religion; though it be no more than the result of orderly habits of thought: its premise gleaned merely from a continual subconscious synthesis of the sum of personal existence. The type of the synthesis matters no more than the form of its result: mockery and atheism of Schopenhauer or von Hartmann; poetic illogicalities of Hegel; dizzy flights of Schelling; materialism of Locke; idealism of Berkeley; magnificent transcendentalism of the imperial Kant;—they become one at last. Truth is one and indivisible; therefore it is the sincerity of thought, not its fashion, that matters. True, Ivan Gregoriev, musician by necessity, philosopher by instinct only, left in the end little record of his answer to the riddle. But this was rather well than ill. For, from the very beginning, Ivan's "glimpse behind the veil" was distorted, clouded, smirched, by an unconquerable cynicism: a personal resentment and rebellion against the God who stood forth as the acknowledged creator of the miserably unhappy race of men. The eternal question:—if God be only Omnipotent Good, why the existence of evil?—he asked in ever-growing bitterness, till so-called altruism became to him a mockery; and he took a painful delight in twisting his wisdom into the most fantastic forms, which he also made the sport and butt of formal logic;

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knowing always, in his own heart, the evil that was wrought in him by those bitter reflections that formed the refuge of his idle hours. Ah! Had Nathalie but cared!

September was gone ere Ivan wrote the dedications of his five newly-finished works. And then, thinking of the men so remembered, he realized that they all happened, for the moment, to be in Moscow. Thereupon he suddenly decided to invite them to Maidonovo for forty-eight hours, and, during that time, to hold a manuscript festival, in which his and their unpublished works should be played each by its composer, and criticised by the listeners.

An invitation from Ivan was not now a thing to be refused. Therefore the evening of October 10th found six men assembled round the samovar in the transformed living-room of Ivan's home. For the time, the host had thrown off his habitual air of grave reserve, and, responding to the friendly and congenial atmosphere around him, expanded to a gayety, a magnetic boyishness, that fascinated as much as it amazed the four who knew him as no others could; and sent Avéllallement, a wealthy German dilettante, whose acquaintance with the famous Russian consisted of a long correspondence and a fanatical admiration of his work, back to his native Hamburg determined on bringing Ivan to Germany, in order that the most sentimental, hospitable and musical race in the world might come to know, as he did, the great-hearted Russian, whose only possible fault was that he had not been born on the other side of the frontier.

That evening, and the day that followed, were more delightful than Ivan had dared hope. Surrounded by those who were big enough to understand him, (and, though he did not realize this, he was now generally recognized as too great a genius to be longer victimized

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by jealousy) he himself shone out with a kind of radiant optimism quite foreign to his general humor. The new works were gone over, and praise, with thanks for the dedications, given with a sincerity that was unmistakable. Finally, his *pièce de résistance*, the symphony, was played again and yet again; first by one musician and then by another, the rest hanging upon each note and chord and progression with the delighted appreciation of men who understood that they were hearing a masterpiece which was to be revered by generations to come, and which was to bring honor to all Russian music. By the second evening Rubinstein, his kindly face beaming with pleasure, was arranging the program of an extra concert in his Vienna series to be devoted entirely to Ivan's works. Ivan promised him the symphony for its first performance there; and Brodsky agreed at once to play the new *concerto*, the study of which he intended to begin, from the manuscript, on the following Monday.

It was perhaps the sharp and painful contrast of the incident that closed this holiday, which made it afterwards shine so brightly in Ivan's memory: a memory to which, in later days, he was to turn again and again, as to the happiest hours of his professional life. His success might not have been really very great.—And yet, the pressure of Kashkine's hand upon his shoulder; the friendly light in Rubinstein's faded eyes, the painful hand-clasp of muscular Balakirev—surely these things showed that the old cabal against him had at last come to a natural end? Moreover the attitude of open admiration adopted both by Brodsky and Avéallément, both of whom lived entirely abroad, plainly betrayed the esteem in which he was held in other lands. Yes; for one hour—perhaps the only one of his life—Ivan felt to the full the exaltation of success, of applause, of the intimate knowledge that, however great his

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praises, they were no more than his work deserved. He was a successful artist: his feet on one of the last steps of that great, golden stairway, around the foot of which thronged such struggling crowds; the serene heights of which were so little trod.—Ay, it had been given him, his bright day! How could he complain when, at eleven o'clock on the second night, old Sóssha entered the room and handed a telegram to his master?

Brodsky and Balakirev were in the middle of a haunting melody of the Steppes, arranged by Mily himself, when the sharp exclamation of Ivan brought a quick silence, and turned every eye towards him:

"I have a message here, my friends.—It is bad news.—I—I must—" he passed his hand across his brow, and thought for a moment: "I must get to Moscow to-night, somehow.—A friend—a man, is dying there, in the Cherémétiev Hospital.—You understand? You forgive me?—It is urgent I should reach him before the end."

There was the natural chorus of sympathy, regrets, assurances of understanding. Only Brodsky betrayed a touch of the curiosity which all felt; for, even to those who knew him best, Ivan's life and connections had always had about them a suggestion of mystery which made his every affair an object of unwonted interest to those who knew him. But to none—not even to Nicholas—did Ivan disclose the identity of the man, or the exact nature of the agitation that spoke of hidden grief.

He made his preparations quietly; bade good-bye to the friends who, though they were to sleep at Maidonovo, would be gone before he could return; and, taking the bag prepared for him by Sóssha, hurried out to the sleigh that awaited him. Seventy minutes after the arrival of the message, the Petersburg mail thundered into Klin on its way to Moscow. Ivan, solitary midnight passen-

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ger, was put on board, together with the mail-bags and registered express.

During the two-hour ride through the roaring blackness, Ivan did not sleep, and scarcely moved. His mind was occupied in going over and over two scenes of the days before his succession: one, the afternoon on which a certain starving youth, fed and warmed by him, had told the story of his struggle for an artistic education; the other, his final interview, two years later, with that same youth, soiled, then, in mind and body; sodden with vice; mentally rotten with the knowledge thereof: the fair god of his ideal dragged from its altar and sold, with all the rest of his great heritage, for less than a mess of pottage.—Again, as he neared the city, these memories were augmented by an anticipation: the imagined picture of the third and last interview he was destined to have with the tragic boy. Ivan was to get his last glimpse into that soul to-night. He was going to one who, dying, had called to him from the depths: Joseph Kashkarin, the Pole.

Dawn had not yet risen. Moscow, wind-swept, dripping with wild bursts of rain, its desolation augmented by the mournful shrieking of wind through the narrow streets, was shrouded in the intense darkness of the last hour of the night, when Ivan at last dismounted from his droschky at the door of the great hospital given to the city by Count Cherémétiev. He found no difficulty in entering; for there is no moment of the day or night when some wretched soul may not find a refuge there.

At the same time, the "Prince" Gregoriev, together with a piece of gold, did serve to cut many yards from the red tape that impedes all progress in Russia. A brief explanation, two minutes' wait, the appearance of a young man garbed in spotless white, a walk up

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two flights of stairs and along a chilly corridor, and Ivan found himself at last halting before a closed door. Here the nurse turned to him saying, softly:

"We were obliged to remove him from the ward at noon to-day. We prefer not to allow deaths in the general rooms if we can avoid it.—Then too, early this evening, the man was suddenly paid for."

"*Paid for!*—By whom?"

"A lady. We do not know the name. She refused to give it, and did not ask to see the patient; but she left a considerable sum for him."

"Why did you not send for me sooner?"

"He never mentioned your Excellency's name till this afternoon. And of course we did not dream that you—you knew him. He has been conscious only at intervals since the hemorrhage yesterday; and he is also under the influence of opiates."

"He is dying of—what?"

"Galloping consumption; and—" The man hesitated.

"What?"

"Well, it is a complicated case. We think there must have been a touch of *delirium tremens* just before he was brought in—a week ago. Alcohol, you see, is the best thing we know for consumption. If the case hadn't been aggravated by privation—hunger, exposure, want,—we might possibly have saved him, at least for the time. But I assure your Excellency that everything has been done—"

"You think it absolutely impossible to save him *now*—if no expense is spared? I give you *carte-blanche*—"

"The man is dying, Prince Gregoriev. Only a miracle could help him now."

There was a moment's silence before Ivan said, very softly: "Let us go in."

The room was small, rather bare, but clean and well-warmed by the huge stove built into the wall, with

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half of it extending into the room beyond. A second nurse was sitting in a chair beside a small table which held medicines and the night-lamp. This man rose as his successor entered, and, at the door, a word or two was spoken between them. Ivan caught the phrase: "No change." Then he halted beside the iron bed and stood looking down on the motionless form of Joseph.

Joseph!—Joseph Kashkarin, this bearded, hollow-eyed, gray-lipped man, with the spots of scarlet flaming from his projecting cheek-bones, and throwing the death-hue of the rest of the face into still more dreadful prominence? Joseph's, that clawlike hand, with the broken, stained and shapeless nails, which once had wielded a brush that created the laughing face of Irina Petrovna—the woman who had brought him down to death? A great shudder seized upon Ivan; and, for an instant, he was forced to turn away. Then the nurse brought him a chair; and he removed his coat and hat and seated himself beside the cot, his face resolutely straightened into an expressionless gravity. As he watched, the nurse administered a hypodermic of strychnia, and then bathed the burning face and hands with cool water. The task completed, the man turned to Ivan, saying, nonchalantly:

"The stimulant may pull him up, sir, for fifteen minutes, if you wish to speak to him. But he's failing. He'll hardly linger to see the sun."

In spite of himself Ivan betrayed something of the thrill that shot through him at these words. Till now he had scarcely realized that he was actually to watch a man start upon that dread passage which leads—none knoweth whither. He sat wrapped in solemn thought until, presently, the form beneath the blankets stirred, and Joseph began to cough:—a cough that shook and racked his emaciated frame as if it would tear flesh from bone. The nurse hurried to his side. But it was

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five minutes before the fit had ceased and the sick man, raised high upon his pillows, regained his breath and the strength to open his glittering eyes, which fell at once upon Ivan. For a moment they stared, dazedly. Then a distorted smile softened the line of the pallid lips:

"*You!*—Then they did send—and you *came!* I'm not dreaming?" He spoke in a whisper, as if to himself; but the words were distinct.

"No, Joseph, I am here.—Joseph, why did you wait?—Why did you not come to me, years ago?—I hunted so long! I never dreamed of leaving you longer than for that one night. I have prayed that—" He broke off, suddenly, remembering that excitement might bring on the cough again. And indeed Joseph's eyes were already closed once more.

Ivan waited, patiently, one, two, five minutes. Then the whisper came again: "That is a long time ago. But I remember why I didn't go to you: why I concealed myself. It was because I was ashamed.—We all wish to hide our dirty souls from every one—even from God, I suppose. Well, *you* had been really good to me; and you were my ideal: the ideal of my best self, and of my art. How could I go to you, when you must see the depths I had got to."

"But you are letting me see you now, and there is nothing dreadful in it," put in Ivan, gently.

"Ah, now I *know* I am dying. You cannot despise a man who is facing eternity."

"I should not have despised you then, if—you had cared.—You see, Joseph, after all, we're brothers. Your God is also mine. We both wanted to serve Him in the same fashion; for all the arts are kin. And I knew how great your talent was: how fine would be the expression of the best in you."

"Ah! That is it!" Joseph sat forward, eagerly, and his faint voice wavered. "'The expression of the

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best,'—that, Ivan Mikhailovitch, is what you tried to give me the chance for: what you always have done yourself. You were moving steadily upward. I was always plunging farther down.—And it was my wilful choice. I think I know the truth now. My service of God was never freely given. It was not the best I could do: the finest work I was capable of, just for the sake of the work, and the high thoughts it brought, to me and to others. There were more sordid motives. I wanted—first, fame: adulation from people; secondly, no, perhaps most of all; *money*. For of that I had never had enough for common necessities in all my life. So, even if there had been no—woman” (that word almost inaudibly,) “I should not have done what you believed I could do.

“Art!—the great sun-goddess, that shines afar! She it is that gives us the gift: the chance to work. But she knows all our hearts; and she judges our deeds honestly. That which she accepts of us, she lays at the feet of the Most High.—Is it well?—Thou art Abel. Thine offering of the lamb is more pleasing than the first-fruits of the harvest. On me,—Cain, God frowns, and the devil grins.—He is grinning through the wine. I hear his laugh amid the clink of the coin.—He is in red; and I flaunt my mistress in his colors. Then we dance: first for sheer delight, with the music. Then the whips come down on our shoulders, and we go on.—Faster!—Higher!—Leap and prance, and watch the grin expand.—Ah-h-h-h!—Are the shadows there deep enough, rich enough, do you think? And are the lips too much a ‘thread of scarlet’?—Oh the opalline lights in that cloud!—How to blend such colors on a palette?—Nature? She is mocking, too.

“But oh, Irina, I see it now, at last! The dawn—the dawn is here. The night is gone. I have dreamed, I suppose: ugly dreams.—But they, too, are done with.—

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Look, my beloved, it is morning! The first sunbeam shines there—and is reflected in your dear eyes!" And, lifting his thin body, arms wide-stretched, eyes a-glitter, Joseph made his last reach up, after the great sun-shaft he had sought so long:—reached, and so, with a faint, far cry of satisfaction, had it, and was gone.

Ivan, feeling his way to the window, opened the curtains and looked out through blurred eyes upon the holy city. The dying man had, indeed, beheld the day. Yet no sunlight glittered upon the Kremlin domes; only the velvet blackness of the dark hour had melted, and given place to a twilight of sullen gray. Then, through the mind of Ivan, exhausted by the emotions of a sleepless day and night, there shot a pang—not of sorrow, but of deep, irresistible *envy*, for the man who had passed away, out of the Russian autumn, into the glory of the everlasting sun-land.

CHAPTER XXII

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BEFORE Ivan left the hospital that morning, he had made all arrangements and provided a generous check for Joseph's funeral. Then, utterly exhausted, he drove to a quiet hotel, sent a telegram bidding Piotr join him with necessary clothes, and finally retired. He remained in the city for four days:—until the interment was over. During that time there occurred two incidents of which he never afterwards was heard to speak, but of which the remembrance never left him; for they eventually proved to be the end of his long and dramatic acquaintance with Irina Petrovna Lihnof.

For all the unspeakable heartlessness of her later career, this many-sided woman showed deep emotion over the tragic end of the man whose youth and career she had ruined. Ivan recognized the fact that, even had he not appeared, Joseph would have received every attention, every aid, while he lived; every honor after his death. And her first visit to Ivan was to beg that he would allow her to reimburse him, at least for the funeral just ended. Ivan's refusal was unalterable. Nor was his feeling of repugnance towards her softened, either by this incident, or by her later well-acted but over-theatrical appeal to his pity, his former affection for her, for the possible restoration of his consideration, even though entire forgiveness for the irrevocable past should be impossible. Ivan unfortunately read her too well. Did he do her an injustice when he said to him-

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self, bitterly, that Prince Gregoriev was worth an attempt which would not have been wasted on Ivan the composer?

It was noon on the fourteenth day of the month when Ivan re-entered the lonely house at Klin, whence he was practically not to emerge for five long years.

In the years between the October of 1879 and that of 1884, he performed the hardest labor of his career. His life was one of Spartan simplicity; nor, though about him Russia fainted beneath the terrible blows of nihilist knouts, did he once lift his head to catch so much as an echo of the furore. Unlike the majority of his fellow-countrymen, he took little interest in the tempestuous history of the period. Still, the event of March 13, 1881, did affect him powerfully enough to produce the most beautiful of all requiem masses: one worthy of the martyrdom it commemorated. For the Liberator met the base reward of his long and arduous struggle to help his people as nobly as had his great American predecessor, who, sixteen years before, had also fallen by a traitor's hand. Yet it is said that none who had known him doubted, as they laid the shattered form of Alexander down, for the last time, on the iron cot of his soldier's room in the great Winter Palace, that the sigh of the dying Czar was no confession of pain, but rather one of relief at this swift solution of his unsolvable problem.

It was two years before the third of that royal name dared don his heavy crown; and when that was done, it was Loris Melikov who became Czar. But, though the secret societies might shriek and rave of the necessary doom of the double tyrant to be downed, the people themselves had tired a little of the everlasting howls of bomb-thrower and assassin; and quieter years succeeded those of Russia's greatest shame.

Ivan, from his hermitage, took some part in the coro-

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nation festival; for from his hand came the Triumphal March, and the great "Victory" overture, played in the Kremlin Square by an orchestra of one hundred and seventy pieces, augmented by bells and cannon.

This was, however, one of the works that Ivan never heard. At the time of its first performance he refused the invitation to conduct it, and did not so much as think of going to Moscow to hear it played. He was in a very different mood from one of triumph; for there had come upon him the bitter grief of Nicholas Rubinstein's death. For two years the old man had faded, visibly. During the summer of 1881, he had spent much time at Maidonovo, where he helped Ivan with the final polishing of his last opera, the famous "Boris Telekin." That autumn, all the old circle conspired together to keep him in the country, where Ivan longed to tend him as a son. But the old man, dominant to the last, insisted on returning to town and resuming his work at the Conservatoire. In the February of 1883 he actually went to Paris, to help Anton and Davidoff prepare for their great festival there. The journey, however, fulfilled Kashkine's bitter prophecy. Nicholas died in the French capital on the evening of March 11th; and Ivan, struck to the heart, crept yet closer into the solitude and isolation of Klin, where, for three months, he yielded himself to Tosca and opium, till a second catastrophe in the Russian musical world was averted only by Kashkine, who routed out his friend and forcibly insisted on beginning rehearsals for "Boris Telekin"; which opera saw its *première* in November; and became the sensation of the season.

This one was the last of Gregoriev's operas. He had already expended too much time on a form unsuited to his talent; and when "Boris" left his hands perfected, he completely lost interest in it, and began at once to devote himself to his unnumbered symphony, the

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"Æneid"; one of the greatest of musical epics, and well worthy of the poem whence it had risen. The fruit of the winter of 1883 and 1884, included also the too-popular "Nathalie" dances, (where, for once, Ivan over-melodized); the "Cinderella" ballet; and his symphonic poem "Dream of Italy." These completed, he sank into a state of torpor from which nothing seemed to rouse him. Overwork had shorn him alike of vitality and of the imagination which had become as the breath of life to him. And the brief tone-poem "Hypatia," forced after a fortnight's visit in October from Madame Féodoreff and her daughters, is the driest, most hopelessly academic, of his works.

Nathalie's departure, however, seemed to break the spell of his dreariness. During the following six weeks he was frequently seen in Moscow and seemed to cling to the companionship of Kashkine; who, in a measure, began to replace Rubinstein with him. In December came Avélallement, acknowledged envoy from the five greatest German orchestras, begging Monsieur Gregoriev to consent to a tour of the orchestra cities of Germany, where he should conduct programs of his own works. To the amazement of the Moscow circle, Ivan received this proposition with something like enthusiasm. Before Christmas he bade good-bye to Russia for an indefinite period; for, the German tour over, he was determined to spend a summer in Switzerland, and follow the autumn down into that Italy of his dreams which he had never seen.

"I have spent too many years in this gray land, Constantine. I am beginning to feel the grayness. My whole soul is yearning for the sun.—I have grown narrow, and stern, and stiff, mentally and bodily. I must expand: must seek out men once more: and countries and peoples that are not ours.—I long for the contrasts of Africa, of Egypt; of the burning desert, with

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skies of fiery blue.—I bid good-bye to Russia. Time shall lead me whither it will!"

Kashkine, gazing at him thoughtfully, felt a sudden chill of doubt creep into his heart. The time for his biography was drawing near.

In mid-December, "Prince" Gregoriev, (the title being the finest of advertisements,) escorted by Monsieur Avélallement, and attended by a stately retinue of servants, arrived in Hamburg, where his tour began. His amazement at the ovations constantly given him, was naïve; for it seemed that Ivan was never to realize the extent of his reputation. But fanatical adulation, following in the streets, constant cranings of the neck from the populace every time he appeared in public, presently began to make him miserable. He was finding fame rather an unwieldy burden. Indeed, he had begun seriously to regret his contract, when he learned that, on a certain evening, both Edvard Grieg and Johannes Brahms, who had travelled from their respective Norway and Austria to meet him, were to sup with him and his host after occupying a box at the last of his Hamburg concerts.

That supper-party gave a bad quarter of an hour to Madame Avélallement, the hostess: a woman of supreme tact, but whom three great artists bade fair to overwhelm. As they seated themselves at table Brahms, who had been in a brown study, suddenly proffered the company an extemporaneous criticism of Ivan's music, which he tore into microscopic bits, and flung upon the winds of sarcasm; after which he perorated elaborately upon his own power and the perfect academic accuracy of his style.

When he had reached his final period, the silence was awe-inspiring. Avélallement, his wife, even Grieg, who was an enthusiastic admirer of Ivan's work, sat dumb.

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with apprehension, quite oblivious of the fact that Ivan, appreciating the solemnity of the occasion, was silent only because he was struggling with hardly repressible laughter. He had diminished this to a smile, however, before he helped himself bountifully to wiener-schnitzel, and remarked, with an air of anxious deference:

"It is a privilege to have heard your views, Herr Professor. In my youth I, too, was a worshipper of the mathematical cult. I should doubtless have compressed myself into that mould had it been possible. But alas! My stubborn inner self would not permit.—After all, each to his own. To me, imagination: the great, melancholy harmonies of the infinite Steppes. To you, your counter-point, your fugue, the infallible, unquestionable sequence of one-two-three. Let us not quarrel, then, over the inevitable."

Brahms frowned. But alas! for the moment, his mouth was full. And Madame Avélallement, breathing a prayer of thanks and relief to Ivan, had seized her instant and turned the conversation to safer paths. Some hours later the two masters parted, in perfect amicability. But it is to be noted that they never met again.

The dour criticism of the rigid classicist was almost the only adverse word spoken of Ivan throughout his triumphal tour. To be sure, it was frequently said that his conducting was by no means equal to his composing: but that was a truth which could have hurt only had it been turned round. Ivan laughed many a time over his unconquerable terror of *daïs* and *baton*; and had not the orchestras he conducted been perfectly drilled in his programs before his coming, he might more than once have come to grief. But it was noticeable that wherever Ivan came into personal contact with the journalists, no praise was afterwards too high for him. For the magnetism of his personality had in-

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creased with the years; and, added to the absence of any conceit in his manner, it made him an object of adulation that drove him into frequent fits of contrary taciturnity.

However, the long years of loneliness and unremitting labor proved an excellent foundation for this little period of relaxation. Also, as his tour continued, he was kept in a constant state of surprise at the number of celebrated musicians who came from flattering distances to hear his concerts and shake his hand. Grieg and Brahms were the vanguard of a distinguished throng: men representing every school, and of every type of ability; from the veteran Carl Goldmark, idol of his following, to a very young man, by name Richard Strauss, concerning whose immature but highly individual compositions, Herr Brahms had already worked himself into many a classical fury in the pages of his favorite musical journal; though more than one great artist—among them Ivan,—believed that wondrous messages were to come from the pen of this youth who already dallied, in such magnificent unconcern, with certain awe-inspiring transgressions of classical laws, augmented and diminished to a breathless degree!

It was nearing March, and the German tour was verging on its close, when Kashkine came from Petersburg, at Ivan's earnest request, to make one of the party invited, by Frau Cosima, to spend a week at the home of Wagner in Bayreuth. It was with a little reluctance that Gregoriev entered this sanctum of the great magician's world. None who knew intimately Ivan's work and that of the creator of the music-drama, could easily comprehend the lack of sympathy between these two men whose music was of so much the same type. Perhaps the similarity rose from very different sources. Certainly the effects produced, however much alike in power and in distinction, had originated in minds bear-

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ing so little resemblance to each other, that neither could see himself reflected in his contemporary. Indeed, as Wagner adored, and yearned to imitate, Beethoven, his diametrical opposite, so Ivan, tempestuous iconoclast, pored, year after year, over Mozart, deeply deploring his inability to imitate the simple, wearisome, weakly-flowing syrup of obviousness, which constitutes the secret of that master's popularity. So the two great men, each of whom must be revered by all the members of the other's following, found in each other, through the insistence of human nature, ficklest of contrary jades, none of the greatness but all of the faults.

Happily, however, there proved to be no reason for Ivan's hesitancy over the invitation of Wagner's remarkable wife. His visit, of which many hours were spent in the opera-house, where rehearsals for the summer's festival were going busily forward, proved far too interesting to require any polite pretence. Ivan took his leave of the widow, (who has done so much to augment the fame of her husband), with expressions of sincere regard and regret, adding, involuntarily, his satisfaction that this stay was to form his final impression of musical Germany.—For, three days later, Monsieur Gregoriev and his suite arrived in Paris: home of a very different musical cult.

Here a new group—one no less distinguished than that of their German brethren,—awaited the Russian star. Aged Gounod, Messrs. Saint-Saëns, Massenet, and Bizet, with Bemberg, Vidal and Duparc the song-writers, together with a little group of the younger school, d'Indy, Charpentier and their set, were gathered together to prepare a festival for Prince Gregoriev, showering on him attentions of every kind; and laboring tirelessly to convince him of their admiration and their "sympathetic appreciation." No blunt comment or criticism

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here! All was smoothly, exquisitely polished: urbanely, beautifully French. But within a week or two Kashkine noted that Ivan was turning inward again towards himself and his habitual solitude. And he knew that presently these complacent fellows would be sticking themselves on the spikes of a chestnut-burr of moroseness, *brusquerie*, and blunt refusals to have anything to do with music and musicians.

• What to do? As the days went on and his fears were fulfilled, Kashkine brought himself a dozen times to the verge of remonstrance, of pleading, of explanation; but, each time he opened his lips to speak on that subject, his courage failed, and he retreated hurriedly to safer topics. It was odd that this gentle-natured man, so easily assailable in general, should prove so unapproachable on the subject of personal expediency. Even Kashkine, already Ivan's Boswell, a man unselfishly eager that his friend should leave behind him a trail of golden admiration, dared not make the suggestion that it were better to move on, merely because he so dreaded the inevitable quiet glance and the direct, unequivocal: "Why?"

Happily, however, Constantine's secret anxiety was soon ended. One afternoon, as the two friends sat together in the *salon* of Ivan's suite, the Prince called Piotr to him, ordered him to arrange a farewell dinner for his friends on the following evening, and to be ready to leave, on the succeeding morning, for Nice, where they would spend the carnival: Lent falling very late this year.

The events of the ensuing months contain no musical history of any note. Italy, still arrogant over her florid successes of the fifties, had nothing but ridicule for the robust northern style which, to the ears accustomed to simple melody, accompanied by the tum-ti-tum of guitar-notes, that lightest dessert of the musical feast,

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was as the howling of demons drowning the songs of an angel-choir. Ivan, progressing slowly southward towards the Eternal City, found his name everywhere unknown; so that he was obliged to depend for comfortable rooms and ready service solely on his title. In Rome, to be sure, the score of "Boris Teleken" was to be seen in a window or two, side by side with those of "Lohengrin" or "Tannhäuser." And there the society of which Leoncavallo was president, gave him a dinner, at which the conversation turned principally on the beauties of the Italian climate and the glories of her historic past.

These things did not, however, wound that professional vanity of which Ivan possessed so infinitesimal an amount. Never was man more thoroughly inoculated by *amor Italiæ* than Gregoriev. During the first weeks of his stay in Rome, guide-books and histories of the city were never out of his hands; and he took up his pen only to write the promised weekly letter to his cousin. Nor, as the spring advanced, and the tides of the Roman populace, driven before the hot blast of the sirocco, began to roll towards Frascati and the hills, would Ivan follow them. On the contrary, he seemed to glory in the increasing heat of the unclouded sun; and, when he had sent from him, one by one, every member of his party save Piotr and Piotr's son, young Ivan, he began to prepare for a more reckless journey, southward. While his anxious but obedient retinue proceeded to Florence to prepare for him a winter abode, this madman, attended by a courier and his two servants, whom neither expostulation nor threat could drive from his side, set out for Naples, en route—*horror incredibilis*, for Sicily!

During July and August Kashkine, staying, in a condition of enraged resignation, in Berne, daily awaited a telegram announcing Ivan's mortal illness or death.

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Instead, however, he merely received frequent epistles from the subject of his fears, written in increasing ecstasy; till finally, in the first week of September, came the climax. In a note dated from Heaven (a place called, by the vulgar, Taormina), there came, at the end of the exclamation points, one or two rational sentences of information. It seemed that, upon the completion of his "Sicilian Fantasia," Ivan intended returning, by degrees, to the north, reaching Florence about November 1st. But he did not forget to add that it would be a voluntary plunge from the skies to purgatory.—For well indeed was Sicily named the "Smile of God!" And as for Russia—Moscow—Petersburg—well! popular mistake had incredibly conceived the infernal regions hot instead of cold; for who on the beautiful earth could ever be unhappy while the sun, visible presentment of the Deity, moved unobstructed through the turquoise vault of Italy?—Italy!—melody embodied: harmony made visible: Mozart paraphrased: Kingdom into which all artists must seek entrance; fairy-land come true!

Kashkine read his letter with relief, with resentment, finally, with laughter. But Ivan's earnest invitation to him to spend the winter in Florence could not be accepted. He had already been absent far too long. Russia claimed him. And thus, when, at last, in the first days of the melancholy month, Ivan arrived at the gray capital of Tuscany where he was to make his temporary home, no friendly faces save those of his servants were at hand to welcome him.

Probably no city in all the world possesses so powerful an attraction for so many people of so many nations as does this grim stronghold of Medici and Borgia. Its society, like that of most Italian cities, is largely cosmopolitan. Its different "colonies" intermingle, however, with the greatest friendliness; and among these "Prince" Gregoriev was effusively received. It was

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less than a month before he was given to understand that, though a fine dilettantism in any of the arts is a charming fad, a professional career for a Prince with a fortune like his was not to be seriously considered for one moment. To the surprise even of Piotr, this attitude amused rather than angered Ivan; and, his summer's work polished and sent away, he smiled in his sleeve and urbanely donned his new garb, determined to play the part assigned him till *ennui* should tear away domino and mask.

By the time he arrived the "season" was already in a vigorous infancy. Daily, in the late afternoon, the Cascine became an international *mêlée* of magnificent equipages and Parisian toilettes. Then, the drive over, those Florentine leaders who owned palaces, and their foreign imitators who contented themselves with a "*Mezzanine*," seated themselves at well-provided tea-tables and entertained a regularly flowing throng of tea-drinking, scandal-mongering women, accompanied by a circle of men of some interest and distinction. In the evening, Florence did still more. By this time, the *salons* were suffocating and airless. Yet there were few nights in the week when, somewhere, the sober reception was not heightened to a ball, sometimes impromptu, more often formally prearranged. Morning found the indefatigable leisure world scattered through one or another of the great galleries, where, before the masterpieces of a by-gone Italy, they recounted all the questionable incidents of the preceding day. And never a woman but could tell the length of time that Countess X—— had remained in the conservatory; or the variety of rouge used by that preposterous Mademoiselle C——, whose mother should really adopt spectacles.

For a matter of four or five weeks Ivan, still living in the glamour of this land of the death-in-life, permitted himself to float, passively, round and round the fashion-

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able whirlpool. It was a wonder he endured so long; for, from the first, he was lionized unbearably, and was soon taken up by the very cream of Florentine society: (a little clique really difficult for foreigners to penetrate); till behold! the old Principessa, head of the lofty house of Contarini, reached a stage of liking and familiarity where she did not hesitate to tap her Prince on the arm with her fan, commanding his escort during her formal progress through her sparsely furnished but highly exclusive *salons*.

Signs of awakening were, however, plainly visible in Ivan's manner before the day of the accident which revolutionized his winter.

Gregoriev, like every other visitor to the city, had observed, and frequently stared at, a certain person who constantly haunted the best of the galleries and resorts—Pitti, Uffizi, Academia, the shop of Vecellio on Lung' Arno, and, finally, the Cascine. She was a woman of rather odd aspect, somewhere near middle age, who was always followed by a maid, but otherwise went alone, unspoken to. Despite her complete isolation, she was unquestionably a person of breeding, probably also, considering the appointments of her carriage, of wealth. More than once it had been on Ivan's tongue to ask about her; but the question was still unspoken when she was thrown forcibly upon his recognition. It was early upon a December afternoon; and Ivan was walking alone on the deserted driveway, his mind engrossed with a recalcitrant theme, when he was broke in upon by the sudden noise of pounding hoofs, rattling wheels, then, after three or four breathless seconds, a scream, interrupted by the thud of a falling horse, the snapping of a shaft, and the plunging of the second animal, who halted, trembling, a few yards away.

But half aware of what he did, Ivan rushed to the horse, caught him by the bridle and held him fast,

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while the coachmen, and a workman or two who had come up, busied themselves over the fallen beast, which, though bruised and bleeding, had broken no bones, and was declared able to finish the journey back to the apartment of "madame."

A few seconds later Ivan found himself standing bareheaded in the presence of the lonely woman of his imagination, who, herself pale, evidently shaken, and coughing violently, was, nevertheless, between her gasps, vigorously remonstrating with her terrified and hysterical maid. Astonished at the force demonstrated by one whom he now perceived to be seriously ill, Ivan accepted an eagerly proffered seat opposite the women, and accompanied them back, across the river, into the city.

The drive was memorable. On its termination Ivan, fascinated by certain observations, accepted further hospitality, and sat for half an hour over a samovar in a beautifully furnished little *salon*; finally saying *au revoir* not only with his lips but with his mind.

That evening, for next to the last time, a Florentine *salon* rang once more with the name of Alexandrine Alexiévna Nikitenko, widow of the Prince of the name who was the younger brother of the head of one of the most famous families in Russia. The story of the run-away and the *dénouement* which had brought two such well-known compatriots together, was in every one's mouth. Ivan was besieged with questions, to which his replies were so unsatisfactory that a general appeal was made to the authority of the Principessa Contarini. To her Ivan gave a brief account of the event, and then himself became an eager interlocutor. His first triple question also ended, for some time, his remarks. And when he had been fully answered, his mind was too full for further utterance.

"Who is this Princess Nikitenko? Why is she in Florence? And why is she not here to-night?"

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A storm of comment, ejaculation, exclamations of wonder! Ivan closed his ears; and opened them again only for the young Contessa Contarini, who, at a nod from her mother-in-law, undertook enlightenment. Then—one half-hour in the dim-lit corner of an inner boudoir,—and Ivan found himself at last *au courant* of the great scandal of 1869, which, wonderful to relate, was still, after nearly eighteen years, almost as interesting as ever: the persistent presence of its heroine almost as astonishing as in the first days of her ostracism.

It was in the autumn of the year 1867, when the reign of the Liberator was in the fulness of its fame, that a certain scandal *intime* began, in St. Petersburg, to divide interest with the still engrossing topic of the freed serfs. Every one in society took sides, for or against, in the quarrel and separation of the young Prince and Princess Nikitenko: both of whom had been, since their marriage, high in the graces of the Grand-Ducal circle, and leaders of the fastest set in the capital. When the trouble between them became noticeable, gossip ran fast and furious; partly for the reason that no human being seemed to understand just where the cause of the difficulty lay. Whispered mention of the Grand-Duke Constantine, madcap-libertine, hero of a thousand escapades, tended in no way to lessen the interest, though of evidence there seemed none. The climax proved to be a fitting one, however; for, early in March, the Princess, with two maids, a valet, her entire wardrobe, and all save the hereditary jewels, disappeared from the ken of humankind.

Six weeks later she was heard from in Florence, where she remained in seclusion during the summer, but in the autumn opened a *salon* which, in point of brilliance, elegance, and distinction, eclipsed every other in the Tuscan capital.

The young Princess was a woman of remarkable

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education, and tremendous gifts.—So much was always admitted.—Her beauty was a moot point: her *chic*, never! She threw herself eagerly into the study of those arts which have made modern Italy what it is; and she rapidly gathered about her the most talented young men in that part of the country. In the January of 1869 this company was signally augmented by the arrival of one Vittorio Lodi, a young Roman tenor; over whose voice—one of those natural organs found only in that land of the sun—Florence speedily went mad.

Up to the middle of the ensuing February, the prestige of the Nikitenko steadily increased in brilliance. Then, suddenly, as it were in a night, the shadows began to gather round her. Whence the first rumor rose, none ever knew. But it ran round the *salons*, down the Cascine, through the town, like a circle of fire. Immediately the watch was set: and immediately the reports began to come in.

Yes, unquestionably it was true. The Princess and Lodi were constantly together. In the morning he was unfailingly to be found in her boudoir, practising, perhaps, his rôle or his songs for the evening. In the afternoon he had a place in her victoria, and they paid their calls together, or he sat beside her at her own tea-table. Every evening that he was free Lodi spent in her *salon*. And on those evenings when he sang, people found Madame Nikitenko “not at home till twelve.”

Soon, inevitably, the world began to draw a little away from the woman, while it courted the man. Immediately, to the general indignation, she withdrew herself, positively, from the world; and Vittorio refused most of his invitations. Then, as the season drooped and died, and spring swept up from the south, the beautiful Alexandrine became invisible to every eye but that of the devoted tenor.

Thenceforth it is a stupid tale. “For her sins,” the

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Russian lady made a long retreat in a neighboring convent; whence she did not emerge until November was sweeping the leaves down the Cascine, and the world was once more at home. When she returned to the city of her former triumph, it was to find every door shut against her, every face averted as she passed. As for the Lodi, he was now in Milan, at La Scala, at a phenomenal salary.

That, behold, was eighteen years ago! Still, inexplicably, Alexandrine returned, winter after winter, to the city of her loneliness. There continued to be stories of regular visits to the convent outside the walls, where, in the odor of sanctity, was growing up a little girl with Nikitenko eyes of purple-blue, and the darkest of waving, Italian hair. None had ever heard of any attempt either at divorce or at reconciliation on the part of the husband, now a man high in the councils of the Reactionary party. Nor was scandal ever again able to couple any name with that of the solitary woman, upon whom a change had been gradually creeping. Many had heard her cough, and perceived the nature of it. A few charitable souls would have relaxed towards her now, had she herself permitted it; but her door remained obstinately closed against all women and every man save her compatriot, Ivan. He, without apparent effort, broke in at once upon her solitude. So, indeed, had the young Contessa prophesied, in sprightly conclusion. Then, yawning behind her fan, she laughed, and commanded the sombre-eyed Russian to take her back to the dining-room and her own circle of adorers.

Ivan himself finished the evening properly. But, as he walked out into the night chill, his heart and brain alike were overflowing with interest, with pity, nay, with a kind of fellow-feeling, for this woman whose bravery was of the greatest known to humanity. Even to-night he had looked into the hearts of women of her own former

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class; and he shuddered at their conscienceless inconsistency. For the moment, probably, he forgot the sage maxim concerning "safety in numbers." The woman who yields herself to a single great passion and will neither hide it nor cap it with another, is surely lost in the world of to-day—or yesterday!

Two weeks. Two little weeks; and the new intrigue of Alexandrine Alexiévna Nikitenko, now in her forty-first year, was the great subject of the Florentine world. For, at the dusty wheels of her battered chariot, she dragged a new captive.—And such an one!—Their lion: *the* lion!—The nobleman of the hour, and a genius to boot!—Incredible.—Nauseating. Finally, resignation; and covert murmurs about green bay-trees. All doors, of course, were still open to Prince Gregoriev. He should have every opportunity for repentance. Only, apparently, Prince Gregoriev cared naught for their high consideration; and seemed to have taken a vow to darken only one doorway in the city beside his own: that hitherto lonely entrance to the apartment of Madame Nikitenko!

As for Ivan, people might chatter and beckon as they would, his interest in them was gone. On the other hand, he had become completely absorbed in the personality of this other, once heart and centre of the gayest set in civilized society; now dwelling in the fastnesses of an isolation such as he himself, connoisseur of solitude, had not dreamed of. For in all existence there can be no such isolation as that of the woman cast out from among her kind, yet too much one of them to endure the companionship of others. At the same time, since no brave fight can leave either man or woman as it found them, so, through the dreary years of her disgrace, Alexandrine Nikitenko, buoyed up by her unbreakable pride, had gathered from her blackened fields no small

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harvest of broad-mindedness, philosophy, and courage. The Alexandrine of old, acknowledged priestess of frivolity, was not a tenth so well worth knowing as the faded, jaded woman, long since numbed to the pain of slights and insults, who had, through the long years, persistently made her dwelling-place in the city of her downfall. She was no saint: affected no martyr's pose: had never, since her departure from the convent within whose walls she left her babe, sought the consolation of religion. Child of the world, in a sense, she must always be; but she was also a woman, softened far more than she herself dreamed. Cynicism was the cloak of her defence; but Ivan, early in their acquaintance, unconsciously folded it back, and beheld the beautiful robe beneath. Thenceforward, throughout the last months of his stay in Italy, their friendship increased by leaps and bounds. The woman began to feel that at last the mysterious Arbiter of human fate had lifted His iron hand, and was looking upon her with forgiveness written in merciful eyes.

On the very day after his first dramatic meeting with the Princess, Ivan had written to Nathalie, in Petersburg, to gather, at first-hand, the details of the Russian part of the Nikitenko drama. Princess Féodoreff replied with her habitual promptness; but the story contained in her letter was rather disappointing. Apparently Florence knew as much as Petersburg. The deserted husband, who had climbed far up the ladder of diplomacy, was celebrated for his morose reticence about his personal affairs. Nathalie's words were almost an exact repetition of those of the little Contessa. Ivan was obliged to wait until, one day, he learned the whole story from the lips of its heroine herself, who told it to him unasked.

Early in their friendship, as soon, indeed, as she perceived that he ranged himself absolutely with her, Ivan

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learned how scrupulously honest Madame Nikitenko was. With manlike exactness she gave him to understand that friendship with him grown purely out of liking would be a godsend to her; but of kindness from compassion she would have none. Cut and gibe had little power to sting. Pity infuriated her. Gallantly she was fighting a disease which every day gained a little ground; and which she well knew to be mortal. But her very maid, the one person whom she deeply loved, dared no more to look at her with understanding of her pain, than she would have bared her back voluntarily to the knout. When, therefore, Ivan, adopting the Princess' own tone, told her frankly that she alone had power to keep away from him that *ennui* which must otherwise drive him out of Florence, she proceeded to tell him openly which subjects must thenceforth remain closed between them. Of these, the principal was her illness, which should, before Eastertide, free her forever from the eyes of the gaping world.

She had had her first hemorrhage in October, immediately after her return from Trouville, where she spent her summers. Christmas Day brought the second—a severe one, which was stopped barely in time. After that followed a long and peaceful interlude: weeks which Ivan afterwards looked back on with wonder; for the glamour of her personality, her magnetism, remained about that memory till the day of his death. His intercourse with her combined the best features of masculine comradeship and feminine Platonism before the mawkish stage is reached. She had the ability, so rare in men, to draw out the best that was in her companion. And Ivan would often find himself displaying qualities of eloquence and brilliancy of which he had never suspected the existence. But the woman never revealed to him their source. She herself was more than rewarded by the originality and the depth of the ideas

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which she merely taught him to express. For, though rhetoric may be cultivated, the most wonderful of tacticians cannot put individual ideas into the brains of a pupil.

Late February found the world, even down to Ivan's own servants, in a state of hot resentment against the Prince's desertion of his class. Ivan, however, cared not a whit. Daily he grew more absorbed: daily he found some newly admirable thing about her in whom he had reawakened the desire and the power to attract. True, their intercourse was purely intellectual. Yet Ivan had long ago perceived, even in the midst of wreck and disease, what this woman must have been in the heyday of her indiscretion; and he realized how helpless he should have been in her hands twenty years before. It is possible that, in time, the physical might have come to life in him. He might have forgotten the years, the emaciation, even the rouge and the careless efforts at concealing gray hairs with badly-put-on dye. All this, perhaps, in time. But, well or ill, fate had determined, long before, that this, her one true friendship, was to be but episodic. It was the prologue to a drama undreamed of as yet; the last act of which was to take place many years after the apparent end, now so near at hand.

Upon the morning of March 15th, a soft and sunny day of the treacherous Italian spring, Ivan, presenting himself at the familiar door, was informed that Princess Nikitenko was indisposed, and begged him to excuse her till the morrow. Thus the wording of the message, which produced no more effect than a little disappointment. Ivan loitered about the streets for an hour, and then suddenly decided to go up to Fiesole and spend his day upon the pleasant height that overlooks the "smokeless city" and the valley of the winding Arno. As he rode up, and up, through the sunshine, past fields

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just touched with the first, faint, exquisite green, a slow intoxication began to tingle through his veins; and lo! the creative instinct came trembling through him once again.

From that moment, time ceased. The hours passed dreamwise. And, at the falling of the day, when the blood-splashed glory of the western sky was balanced in the east by the soft radiance of the low-swinging moon, his latest inspiration swelled towards its culmination. Long and long he sat alone on the little terrace before the gray, stone church, his mind wandering through space to the accompaniment of wondrous harmonies, himself oblivious of time and men.

It was after one o'clock when at last he reached his apartment and entered the antechamber where, to his astonishment, stood Piotr, anxiety written on his wrinkled face. As the door shut behind Ivan, and he stepped into the light of the hanging lantern, Piotr started forward, crying:

"Excellency!—At last!"

"Who else could it have been?—What are you waiting for?"

"It might have been one of Madame Nikitenko's men. — At four this afternoon her major-domo came saying that the Princess is believed to be dying. She—"

"Good God!—*Dying!*"

"There was a hemorrhage early in the morning; and—"

"She has sent for me?"

"They have come three times, Excellency; but I could not reach you. I had no idea where you—"

Ivan cut him short with a nod, clapped on his hat again, and ran hurriedly out into the peaceful, moonlit night.

Fifteen minutes later he was standing at the door of her apartment. He had not yet knocked; for his heart

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was beating, tumultuously, and he knew that he was afraid of the word that might greet him. Still—every window visible from below had been ablaze. Surely it could not have happened—yet.

He knocked, quietly, at last; and, after a little wait, was admitted to the antechamber by a person who was strange to him. This was a young girl, sixteen or seventeen years old, her head crowned by a coronal of heavy braids; her eyes, of a deep, purplish tint, rimmed with jet-black lashes, exact replicas of the Princess' own. Meeting those eyes, Ivan gave a sudden, comprehensive start. Then he said, a little confusedly:

"My name is Gregoriev. I understand that the Princess Nikitenko sent for me some hours ago. I received the message only within the last half-hour. Can you tell me if she is easier?"

The girl shook her head, slowly. She was very quiet, but seemed dazed. "No. It is impossible that my mother can live. I came at six o'clock. She saw me, and knew me, then. The priest is with her now; and the Signor Dottore is waiting, in the *sala*. Please to come in, Eccellenze. If she should be able, after receiving absolution and the unction, she—she may see you, monsignor.—Ecco!"

Speaking in a low, wonderfully rich voice, Vittoria Lodi led the way into the familiar little *salon*, where a young man, known to most of the foreign colony in Florence, sat reading a medical paper. At Ivan's entrance the Englishman rose, and the two talked in whispers, the doctor giving Ivan a résumé of this last seizure: the fearful hemorrhage which had continued for half an hour, and had started up again at intervals throughout the day; and the marvellous vitality which had upheld her, even though her body was nearly bloodless, and her two lungs almost solidly filled.

As he finished speaking, Dr. Tremont looked at his

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watch. "A quarter to two.—She may possibly hold out till daylight. But from now on the vitality ebbs, and it is more than likely that she will go, quietly, at any moment.—I trust you can see her, Prince. But I hardly dare interrupt the priest, who came to her at her special request."

"Certainly not. My great regret is that, not dreaming the attack was serious, I left town for the day.—I shall never forgive myself."

A few words more of reassurance and sorrow, and then the two men seated themselves, the doctor returning to his paper, while Ivan sank into an arm-chair, and stared at the fire that burned in the tiny grate. Vittoria, thoroughly Italian in her habits, had withdrawn from this, and crouched on a little tabouret, leaning forward to rest her elbows on a chair in front of her, her chin propped upon her palms. The silence was absolute. The light of lamp and fire mingled and cast flickering shadows and fingers of light into the dark recesses of the antechamber. The air was tainted with the smell of iodine, carbolic, and various antiseptics; but the door leading into the Princess' bedroom was closed, and the portière also drawn across it. Young Tremont, whose thoughts had wandered from his reading, guessed rightly that Ivan's mind was fixed on what was passing beyond that door. Of the meditations of the girl, the daughter of his patient, who had arrived in the afternoon in the company of the priest now absolving the Princess, he was not so sure. And, as he thought, he began unconsciously to study her slender figure and half-hidden face.

How beautiful—how *very* beautiful—she was! Ah! Was it beauty? Was it not rather a kind of *chic diablerie*, that is so much more attractive, so much more dangerous, than mere perfection of feature and proportion?—Good Heavens! What a destiny, too, for

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such a personality! The mother dying; the father long since lost in the dreary throng of forgotten failures; not a relation in the world who could possibly acknowledge her left-handed relationship to one of the most powerful families in Europe:—what was left her but the veil? Instinctively he perceived that she must be intended for this. And yet, to put *that* creature into a convent! Set the Venus de Milo in a cathedral crypt!—What sort of nun would she make, this child of temperament and unholy passion? *Could* they manage to keep her consecrated to the hush of prayer, the eventless, endless routine of the mechanical religion of her order?

Again and again these thoughts revolved through the young man's brain; but he did not note that Ivan's gaze was fixed on Vittoria with the same expression; that his own thoughts were echoed in Gregoriev's mind. Ivan, indeed, was undergoing rather a startling dream, or hallucination, or waking-vision:—call it what one might.

Up around him, blotting out all the room save the little space where Vittoria sat, there rose a silvery white mist wherein she was framed. Then, gradually, her seated form faded from sight and reappeared again, changed in costume, and in attitude. And again she faded and reappeared, and again, and yet once more. He saw her in many pictures, in familiar places, in the company of persons known to him in the long ago. She was in Russia, in Petersburg. De Windt, not now young, his temples silvered, his eyes grown weary, was at her side. He was succeeded by others, men and women of exalted rank, many of them seeming oddly familiar to Ivan, who sat entranced, watching and wondering at the vividness of the dream. And while he gazed down the strange future of this girl, he seemed to realize, intangibly, that she whom he watched was in some way bound up with his own fate: connected with him by some powerful chain of circumstance.

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The pictures, continuing, began to grow hazy. Little by little his sensations became less acute. He was yielding to the influence of intense fatigue. Tremont saw his head droop forward to his breast, and his eyes close. Darkness descended. Oblivion trembled over him. Then, suddenly, there was a creak, a movement, the sound of moaning. The mists dropped away. Tremont and the girl sprang to their feet; for the door of the Princess' room had opened and the priest emerged.

On the father's white face were traces of emotion. His right hand was uplifted, two of his fingers stretched out in benediction. As he spoke, his old voice trembled:

"Let us give thanks to God for His mercy. A sinful soul, repentant and shriven, has been gathered home."

Vittoria, with a low cry, fell upon her knees. Ivan, gone deathly white, stepped forward.

"The Princess Nikitënko is dead?" he asked, dully.

"In the odor of sanctity, my son."

In one brief hour, the shattered illusion of these last weeks of Ivan's Italian existence had crumbled utterly away. As one walks in some unhappy dream, he endured the double ceremonies of funeral and burial. A great crowd was present at the first of these, in the Santo Spirito; and their eyes were glued neither on coffin nor on priest, but every one upon the crape-shrouded figure of a girl, who knelt between Ivan and Madame Nikitenko's heart-broken maid, Marie Latour. Next day the great subject of the *salons* was this girl's identity, and the reason for the tears which every one declared had flowed so copiously from the purple eyes that might have been stolen from the dead woman who lay upon the high, violet-strewn catafalque, surrounded by a ring of twinkling lights. Yet no one in that eagerly sacrilegious throng had the luck to perceive the most dramatic figure in the church: the shabbily

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dressed, middle-aged man who, hidden in the shadow of a chapel-pillar, stood watching his daughter, her escort, and the throng of familiar people who had once received him, the outcast, as one of themselves.—Even Gregoriev never suspected this last touch to the finished story. And, had he known it, it could in no way have lightened the weight that lay on his heart when, upon his return to his lonely rooms, he called Piotr to him, in the twilight, and spoke to the man who was afraid to show the joy caused by his master's wearily-spoken command.

“In two days, Piotr, we shall leave for Russia.—Make things ready; and come to me for the necessary money.—Great God! How hideous the world can be!”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE HERMIT

THE issue of the *Moscow Journal* for March 26, 1887, announced the return of Prince Ivan Gregoriev to Russia after a thirty-month absence abroad; adding that he was in Moscow for a few days only, before proceeding to his country-place of Maidonovo, near Klin. As a matter of fact, Ivan, after a railway journey of sixty hours, arrived in Moscow on the evening of one day, and remained at the Slaviansky Bazaar until the afternoon of the next. During this brief period, he was besieged by visitors of every description, from the barest acquaintances, to men like Balakirev and Ostrovsky; and, to the general chagrin, all were alike refused. Ivan was in his blackest mood. When, three hours before the departure of the Klin train, Piotr, taking his life in his hands, did admit Kashkine, it was half an hour before that rarest of diplomatists could bring the gleam of one faint smile across his old friend's face. In his memoirs the admirable Constantine has left a picture of Gregoriev as he was at this period—in his forty-eighth year:

“A figure lean, not very tall, giving the dual impression of wiry fortitude, and a delicacy that was rather *spiritual* than physical, Gregoriev's body formed a marked contrast to his face—at sight of which, on the day of his return, I confess to having been shocked, so changed had it become since my last view of it. From black, with a slight silvering only at the temples, his hair and beard were now almost pure white. The lines

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of care in his face had deepened incredibly. The skin had something of that parchment look that I had supposed to be the special mark of the recluse; but Ivan told me he had been a good deal out-of-doors in the last months. Without asking, I perceived at once that he was under his special morbid scourge; and when I learned that he intended retiring to Klin for a period of complete isolation, I was less astonished than dismayed. I think I had even a momentary presentiment that from this retirement he was destined never to emerge; though I knew that he was still some years removed from his fiftieth birthday. However, with Ivan Mikhailovitch, time was never a thing to be considered. He was a man of eternity."

Into their two hours together on that last Moscow day, the friends crowded much important conversation. Ivan unfolded his plans for the future; and discussed those manuscripts he had brought back, and which he afterwards intrusted to Kashkine to be delivered to his publishers. Immediately upon the first printing, they were to be sent to the Musical Society, to be passed or rejected for the next season's concert series. This business finished, Ivan plunged into an impulsive account of the bizarre history of his last months in Florence. But when he had reached a half-way point, he as suddenly halted; and, Piotr a moment later announcing that the carriage waited to drive him to his train, Ivan bade his friend a hurried farewell. Kashkine only learned the end of the tale that interested him so deeply, some fourteen months later.

Once more, as on the first day of his possession, Ivan reached his hermitage in the late afternoon of a spring day. But this home-coming was not like the first; for, among the little throng of servants gathered in the hall to meet their Prince, one face was missing. After hasty greetings, Ivan, with a sudden sense of the truth,

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asked haltingly for the old servitor whom he had sent back to Russia, nine months before, from Naples. The reply, anticipated by but one moment, was a great shock to him. Old Sóssha had been buried yesterday; his last words being a greeting to the master he had so longed to see again.—And Ivan might have been present at the funeral of this dearly-loved old man!—But he made no rebuke; for he knew that the humility of these poor creatures would never have permitted them to disturb his pleasure for one of themselves.

It was, perhaps, only morbidness that Ivan should have allowed the death of Sóssha, a man of eighty-four, to affect him as it did. Yet the following weeks taught him that all his recent gloomy meditations and self-analyses had had in them an element of affectation incompatible with real grief. Was it not real grief, then, that he was suffering now? For weeks he lived in the blackness that was horrible to those who watched him. And finally Piotr, who dared anything for his master, sent, secretly, for Kashkine—whom he believed endowed with miraculous powers wherever his Prince was concerned. But for once Kashkine's presence seemed powerless to rouse the composer from his lassitude: a feat which was eventually accomplished by one who knew him more intimately than any man.

It was now many years since his cousin and true companion first began to make her deeply affectionate study of Ivan's moods. In May, according to a former custom, Nathalie came down to Maidonovo, unaccompanied by her daughters. And Kashkine, after watching her during one day and night, retreated, gallantly leaving the field to her. It was one of the few times on which she came alone to Ivan's home; and her excuse for the act was one newly characteristic of her:

"My dear Ivan, I am forty-four years old: a safe age, if ever woman is to attain to one. I now, therefore,

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insist upon the comfort of personal freedom. It is the one compensation permitted for the loss of the youth which can make freedom dangerous."

Ivan's reply to the theory was a smile. For neither by him nor by herself could the graceful, beautifully groomed, *chic* little woman possibly have been regarded as she chose to describe herself. At the same time, it would have been a person utterly beyond the pale who would have admitted the possibility of impropriety in the behavior of the Princess Féodoreff, one of the greatest ladies of Petersburg. She had long since recovered any ground lost during the few months of her separation from her dissolute Prince. And within the last eighteen months rather a signal honor had been offered her in the intimate friendship of the Grand-Duchess Catharine:—most irreproachable, unapproachable, and, at the same time, most popular, of the imperial women of Russia. Perhaps her friendship with this Princess was the more genuine and the more truly sympathetic in that, as she was well aware, her own history and that of her Imperial Highness bore many points of resemblance. For the great-granddaughter of Constantine the Abdicator was the wife of one of the most dissolute of the Grand-Dukes, whose abuses of manhood no ingenuity of his proud wife was able to conceal. Hence Nathalie, herself so intimately acquainted with this poignant form of suffering, was just now very full of her friendship with the beautiful Princess; and she poured into Ivan's half-listening ears all that she knew of this exquisite woman, married at seventeen, left alone in her cold and unapproachable state, to learn all the dire details of a state marriage: and now mother of a son who, in very boyhood, was already believed to be gazing with interest down the path his father had trod. Even Nathalie herself could not guess the anguish with which this secret dread had already filled the mother's heart; nor the struggle she

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was prepared to make before her motherhood should be dishonored as her wifehood had always been.

In time the story of this Princess, told, day by day, in semi-accidental snatches, laid hold of Ivan's imagination. By degrees he began to enter into the life that was being laid bare before him with all the intimate understanding that is part of the Creator's gift. For many weeks after the departure of his cousin, indeed, Ivan mused upon the subject of the royal lady, dowered, apparently, with every enviable possession of wealth and power, and yet one of the most truly unfortunate of humankind. The immediate result of this was the writing of the "Three Studies," unnamed, so long left in manuscript, and so persistently misunderstood. It is only, indeed, within the last five years that they have been discovered to bear a direct relationship to the last three movements of his greatest symphony. To-day they form the treasure of that small but expanding cult who have been so mocked at for their serious study of the connection between various harmonies and the mental emotions, from which has grown the dream of establishing a perfect musical law.

It was the spring of 1889 before Ivan at last began to work seriously upon his "Sixth Symphony": that which had been growing in his mind for more than ten years; and which, while it forms, perhaps, his greatest claim to immortality, was the first to open the eyes of Philistia to the splendors of his powers. Like all of those few artistic masterpieces that approach perfection, the "Tosca Symphony" is popular alike with the many and with the few; because it contains something of the essence of all humanity: strikes a chord that must find some echo in the breast of every man and woman that has known the meaning of pain. But, superb as was the height attained in this work, Ivan paid dearly for its accomplishment. For, from the nervous break-

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down that marked its conclusion, he never fully recovered.

In the weeks dividing New Year's Day from the April of 1890, Gregoriev seldom left his bed. He was attended night and day by Piotr and Piotr's son; who saw, with growing alarm, how slowly the strength seemed to come back to him, and how little increase of vitality arrived with that quickening of the year to which Ivan had always heretofore responded so eagerly.

Through the long days during which he alternated between fever and debility, Ivan sank into a hell of the senses; and daily gazed with longing upon the still closed gates of life. He had heard the low-calling voices of departed Shades. He had been given misty glimpses of the Elysian land that lay beyond those high black bars. Long and long was it before he could turn his face from that vision back to the grays and glooms of his worn routine. And when at last it became patent to him that this must be, he still clung to the erratic and feverish fancies for the abnormal, that had come to him in his illness. By May the Maidonovo household stood aghast at the incomprehensible manner of their silent master's renewed life. Those who knew him well surmised his mental condition; but even Kashkine could not fathom the depth to which his thoughts had sunk. Certainly none but a Russian could, or can, comprehend the terrible reality of what must, to the inhabitants of the sunshine lands, seem the mere wilful depression of a hypochondriac. But those men and women who have dwelt all their lives beneath a sky of leaden gray, in an horizonless space of desolate, unbroken steppe; whose children and children's children must come into a heritage even heavier than their own, handed down from those first, hunted creatures who began the age-long battle with ice and snow and frozen hurricanes—these, alas! know well that the disease of Ivan was no pretence,

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but a reality, as grim, as terrible, as sullen, as the temperament of their peasant-brethren. And not one of them but had felt, to some degree, the same, deep, passionless, revulsive anger that was working in him, and turning him from the old, secret habits of spiritual meditation and high thought, into passions of blasphemy and atheism which burned ever deeper into his brain.

It was in this final phase of inward revolt against the submissive religions that are permitted to govern the world, that Ivan, nearly recovered from bodily weakness, took up the history of religion and began to search, diligently, through all the forms of anthropomorphism, for that one which should display the most artistic beauty and formal grace. It was impossible to hesitate long. There is no paganism of obscure antiquity that can compare, in poetic beauty, with the scarce-forgotten rites of the Hellenic Pantheon. Fired by an unlooked-for enthusiasm in his chosen task of apostasy, he finally took for his protective deity that least divine, weakest, and most exquisite of the gods of the Greeks:—Aphrodite.

Mad Ivan! Far indeed went he in his bitter defiance of High God! His attendants looked on in frightened mystification at the changes now preparing in the inner of the two up-stairs rooms in which their master had been wont to work. Some simple carpentry; a large number of unusual articles commanded from Moscow: one, more expensive than all the others, brought in a coffin-like box from France; the transference of all his paraphernalia of work into the outer room; and behold the fane of Ivan's new goddess!—a semicircular chamber hung in deep violet; in the centre of the jut a low, circular pedestal, draped in black, and flanked on either side by two high church candlesticks of wrought silver, containing painted candles kept always alight, the windowless room containing, beside these, only one, silver lamp hanging from the centre of the sombre ceiling.

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Opposite the altar-pedestal, stood the single piece of furniture in this strange room: a long, low couch of Spanish leather, violet in color, placed so that the occupant could gaze directly upon the figure finally lifted to the pedestal prepared for her: an exquisite modern statue of Aphrodite of old, which had won a young Frenchman the Prix de Rome, and was compared by those authorities not inimical to the sculptor, to be worthy of the chisel of Praxiteles. Ivan had taken advantage of the quarrel among the committee who were considering it for purchase for the Luxembourg, and had bought it from its affronted creator for one hundred thousand francs.

Three workmen and Piotr had, during its preparation, gained glimpses of this room. Afterwards Piotr entered it once or twice in the month for the purpose of cleaning. But, barring this, once the door was shut on the completed shrine, no one save Ivan beheld it; though he soon knew it to be the chief reason why he was spoken of with bated breath by his own servants; and called by the inhabitants of Klin a madman. And, truly, there were days when his appearance and behavior might have brought that thought to other minds than those of illiterate peasants. But these were only the hours when he was dominated by the fantastic spirit inherent in the pungent paste which he kept in a golden, jewel-studded tube at the feet of the goddess. For, when the black butterfly of his melancholy now danced before his eyes, Ivan reverted remorselessly to that opium which he had for years abstained from. These days were irregular, however, and the act voluntary, being not as yet compelled by physical craving. And, in the intervals, he pursued his ordinary occupations of reading and composing, to which he had now added the transcribing of his own memoirs and a self-instituted office of beauty-worship at the statue-shrine, inaugurated in a fit of angry repudiation of Christian rites, and

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continued in that spirit of half-ironical defiance that was now his most salient characteristic. So, month by month, he dwelt alone, withdrawing daily more and more within himself, and by degrees lessening personal contact as much as possible even with his servants. Nevertheless he retained one means of communication with the world beyond, in a correspondence maintained with half a dozen representatives of as many different grades of life: Nathalie, of whom he constantly demanded further details of the story of the Grand-Duchess Catharine; Balakirev, now long since in Zarembo's chair at the Petersburg Conservatoire; Avéallément in Hamburg; an odd little Parisian journalist—through whom he had eventually obtained the *Thébaud Venus*; and, lastly, there departed from Maidonovo, twice a month, letters addressed to the inmate of a certain convent in the Arno Valley near Florence, whence replies as regularly arrived, giving quaintly monotonous accounts of the life and welfare of one Vittoria Lodi, at present merely a dependant in the convent and the special penitent of the writer: a little old priest, the only man ever allowed within those sacred walls.

In every one of these people Ivan, despite his distaste for personal contact with men, took the keenest interest. Their welfare was of genuine moment to him; though wherefore, he could not himself have said. Probably this form of communion with his fellow-beings satisfied the hunger for social intercourse without which man cannot exist as man. And by degrees his memoirs—the continuation of a sporadic journal long kept up, which was, however, merely a mass of disconnected thoughts, flashes of perception, remarks on personal events, and endless reflections on the unrevealed Alpha and Omega of life—began to be filled with other matter: chapter after chapter containing nothing but accounts of and speculations concerning two beings as far apart

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as the poles of the earth, and bearing no such similarity: the history and surmised character of Nathalie's beloved patroness, the Grand-Duchess Catharine, and those of the child of the wild romance of Alexandrine Nikitenko and Vittorio Lodi.

As to the mental atmosphere in which Ivan passed these strange days and nights of his, it was indescribable, but peculiarly powerful. For, just as there are certain incidents or periods in our lives which, for no perceptible reason, stand out in our memory with marked vividness, so these last weeks of Ivan's were so fraught with nervous electricity that each smallest incident took on the importance of an event. And Ivan, considering, became gradually convinced that these were the last days of his life.

Gregoriev was fifty years old; a man ordinarily normal, robust, unweakened by excesses of any description or by any irregularities of life. High-strung nervously though he was, there was still no doctor but would have given him many years yet to live. Nevertheless, his hallucination of approaching death remained unshaken; and he looked forward to the end quite calmly, as the sure conclusion of a prescribed term of study and work: the beginning of a rest of undetermined duration.

Unnatural as his life had become, the months from May to October were nevertheless fertile in production. All the works of this time, however, are so peculiar in style that they remained in manuscript long after his death, and the general public are still unfamiliar with that which is probably the greatest, though no doubt the strangest of them all: the "Pagan Fantasia," after the first reading of which Kashkine and Balakirev, who were alone together, looked angrily from each other to the fire, from which nothing but the memory of their friend's dead face saved that composition which afterwards came to exercise so powerful a fascination over

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both of them. At the same time, the spell which those unparalleled harmonies casts over the auditor is considered so unhealthy, that this flower of Ivan's madness is not yet in print. Others of the works of this time, the "Songs of the Herzeleide," the "House of Life," and the "Hymn to Pan" (both these last written for organ and orchestra), together with the "Serenade to Death," are gradually acquiring a public who listen in disorganized astonishment to these records of a soul in the strangest travail ever revealed to fellow-men.—But enough! Another paragraph, and Gregoriev is lost forever to Philistia!

Not only Kashkine, but all those who heard of Ivan at this time, believed that, behind his eccentricities, there still lurked a sardonic grin at his own behavior; than which there can surely be no healthier sign! Yet, towards the very end, he committed an act which once more plunged the most indulgent of his friends into exasperated anger with his folly.

Since his passing, the baton of Nicholas the well-beloved had been wielded by Brodsky, who had acquitted himself through two seasons of symphony concerts with considerable credit. The date of the first concert of the series of 1890–1891, had been set for October 9th; and its *pièce de résistance* was the "Sixth Symphony" of Gregoriev, whose fiftieth birthday was to be celebrated by the playing of this, his greatest work, with whose praises Moscow was already mysteriously a-murmur; and afterwards by a supper, to be given that evening by his old confrères of the Conservatoire. It was really Russia's capitulation to her greatest musician, in whose universal acclaim there was to be not one dissentient voice.

On the first day of the month Ivan received a letter from Kashkine, explaining these things, giving a minute plan of the arrangements, and eagerly congratulating

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Ivan on his assured triumph. For, well as he knew his friend's instability, Constantine never for an instant doubted that Ivan would consent to appear at a reunion for which, as Kashkine knew, he had been longing, bitterly, ever since the sudden accession to his father's wealth and title had barred him from the old-time fellowship.—Wherefore Constantine's letter was couched not in terms of pleading, but in sentences of joyous satisfaction at the prospect of Ivan's delight. This was the reply:

“MAIDONOVO, *October 2nd.*

“MY DEAR CONSTANTINE CONSTANTINOVITCH,—Many thanks. Unfortunately, I have now endured about thirty years of concerts; and I fear that the thousand-and-first will hardly tempt me to Moscow. Appropriate all applause to yourself; for verily I think you are the man who has kept me at it for the past ten years. Also, do not give up your *festa* afterwards. It will be far better than if I were present to silence the mirth with my morose presence. Drink me one toast, if you will; for it is borne in upon me that that day will be one of transformation for me. Therefore wish me, while I wish you

“Success and happiness!

“IVAN BLASHKOV-GREGORIEV.”

And Kashkine, crushing the letter savagely into a ball, muttered, between his teeth: “Ah! ‘transformation’! we’ll all drink to that! But, by God, it ’ll never come to him now!”

By a quarter before two o’clock on the afternoon of October 9, 1890, the Symphony Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire was filled to the doors. The winter season had doubly begun; for, outside, sleighs were flying joyously through the first snow-storm. All the inhabitants of the Kremlin and Equerries’ quarters were back from estate and resort; and most of the ladies of their families were seated in the wreath of boxes that crowned the amphitheatre of the hall. Indeed, from a

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fashionable and musical point of view, it was an audience such as has seldom been surpassed in the old Russian city; and, to *mondaine* and musician alike, the Gregoriev symphony was the event of the afternoon. For was not its composer a Prince, a millionaire, and his composition the masterpiece of Russian musical literature?

In the left-hand stage-box were gathered a little group of his own, old circle, about the empty chair which had been reserved, in case—faintly possible—the erratic one should suddenly appear. Kashkine, Laroche, Ostrovsky, and Ivan's passionate young admirer Rimsky-Korsakow, sat there in silence, all of them thinking the same half-bitter, half-resentful thoughts. In their own minds they were persuaded that the success of the symphony meant more to them than to any other persons either in the audience or in the city. But they were oddly wrong. Near them were seated two women, one in a box, amid a little group of people of the extreme of fashion; the other by herself, in a stall in the parquet. Both of them were secretly and nervously afire. Both looked anxiously for Ivan's appearance, longing eagerly for a sight of his face. And the two of them were at opposite ends of the feminine world; for one was the Princess Nathalie Féodoreff; the other, a white-faced, worn-looking, plainly dressed woman, seemingly of the lower middle-class, was Irina Petrovna; finished, now, with the active degradations of her life; living in a great silence, upon the scanty savings of her years of mad extravagance. For her, this was to have been a day of days: a daring expense, to be paid for by the sacrifice of luncheon and supper, little missed in the joys of anticipation and memory. Her worn-out emotions had fired again at the dream of meeting the one man who had for years remained the unshattered idol of her heart. Her comprehension of his music—life-music as it was—was fuller, perhaps,

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than that of the delicate Princess; to whom Ivan's unexpected absence was but a passing disappointment. She had come down from Petersburg to hear the symphony; and, since he was evidently not to be present, she suddenly decided to be the first to carry him the news of his triumph. As she considered the plan, her excitement grew; and she resolved to take the train which left at six o'clock for Klin: daring her cousin to turn her from his inhospitable door in the late evening.

Every one knows what happened at the concert, when, for the first time, the notes of that matchless symphony fell upon the ears of the world: when the supreme desolation of the magnificent, crashing retrogression of the finale held a thousand people in breathless, trembling stillness; the tears of Ivan's boundless yearning: the passions of the true *Weldschmerz* glazing every eye. Accounts of the mad storm of applause which finally rose into a chorus of shouts for Ivan, are still preserved in the scrap-books of those who were there. And, though Ivan came not and the noise was finally stilled, two hours later, when the audience trooped out into the snowy darkness, but one name was on every lip: one regret in every heart. Had he but known it, Ivan's act in not coming was an unconscious but complete revenge for his years of neglect.

At the entrance to the hall the Princess Féodoreff parted from her astonished hostess, saying that she intended passing the night at the house of the Grand-Duchess—wife of the Governor-General. And, leaving her friends appeased by this sufficient but rather unexpected excuse, Nathalie hurried into a public droschky, and was presently flying through the streets towards the Petersburg station—and Ivan.

Thus was Ivan finally, and for all time, established in his own land. Thenceforward, while music shall

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endure, his name must be written among those who have advanced their most perfect of the arts to a higher standard. His work was done: his battle over. His name was blazoned for eternity on the roster of the Russian Great.

But the man? Where was he, what was he doing, upon this, his day?

It was half-past three when the first movement of the "Tosca Symphony" ended in the concert-hall. At that hour Ivan returned to his house from a long walk through the whitened fields, and, donning dressing-gown and slippers, went up to his work-room and shut the door. Moved by a most unusual impulse, he seated himself at the piano and began to play, from memory, some strains from the last act of "die Götterdämmerung." At the point where Brunhild, carried beyond herself and her abhorred mortality back to the heights of immortal perception and abnegation, sings, with divine calm, the words: "Ruhe, Ruhe, du Gott!"—Ivan paused. The phrase caught him up. The majesty of the chords in which the great German has framed it, suddenly fired him with longing: "Rest thee, Rest thee, thou God!" He played it over and over, meditatively, humming the words in the rich, low notes of the score. And in those moments his final hour was ushered in.

All day, struggle as he would, Ivan had been keyed to a pitch of nervous excitement by speculations concerning the concert in Moscow. Finally, at noon, he had gone out, determined upon attaining an animal fatigue which would rest his brain. His struggle with the wind and snow accomplished the first end, but not the second. Now, however, those words of the dying goddess—she who stood quietly awaiting her chosen death, brought a great calm to his mind. As he lingered over them his face changed, and a new look came

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into those eyes which had striven so many times, of late, to pierce the shadows that enshroud the future.

"Rest thee, oh God!"

Rest—for *him*! How often had he demanded it, in vain? Now, at last, he was enjoined to *take* it—for himself.

Rising from the piano he went to the door which led into the outer hall, locked it, and drew the bolt fast. Then, in the wall on the right, he pressed the spring which opened the invisible door to the room of the goddess. Entering there, he lighted the two candles at the flame of the burning lamp, and filled the little golden censer that swung before the statue, with incense; noting, the while, with his customary delight, the delicate transparency of the pure Carrara against the soft violet of the hangings behind her and the shadowy black at her feet. Finally, when the thin, fragrant smoke had begun to fill the room with its soft haze, he took the golden tube from its place on the pedestal, and prepared for himself the largest dose of the narcotic that he had ever dreamed of taking. After that he returned, quietly, to his piano.

Darkness had nearly come, and the unlighted music-room was lapped in a pleasant twilight, broken only by the faint gleam from the candles, which entered through the open doorway. The odor of the incense was everywhere; and the mystic scent and warmth of the inner air contrasted well with the shrieking of the demon-ridden wind outside the house. The atmosphere perfectly suited Ivan's state of mind. All anxiety about the concert had gone. Some inkling of success floated through his brain; but the matter now seemed infinitesimally small. The world, with its struggling millions of unknown men and women, was farther away from him now than the shadowland of the departed. For he was almost face to face with the problem of Eternity.

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Alas! In the life he knew, how small a part did justice, that law innate in every human heart, play? How much less seemed the justice of God towards his creatures, good and bad, than the justice, or the pity, of these creatures for one another? It was this feeling which had generated that deep, all-pervading sense of injury, that anger with and distrust of the Almighty, that had thrown Ivan into his revolt. And who was to explain why we are left in the world without any knowledge of whence and whither; knowing only that from birth till death we are surrounded by evil:—evil rewarded; good defiled, disgraced; yet mankind still under the command of man and of God to walk straightly, in fear of promised damnation? It was the question he had asked in his “Tosca Symphony”: that symphony of helpless, human wonder and sorrow. And the question, repeated for the last time in the great *motif* of the *finale*, was still unanswered.

He sat, now, drearily playing fragments of various works, his brain teeming with memories: of his mother, in her sweetness and purity, bound for life to the brute force that had crushed her youth away in the first days of her married life; of Nathalie and her husband, the husband who had been the—admirer—of her own mother; of that shadowy Princess whose grave eyes he beheld overflowing with her secret woe, as they overlooked the vast and misty throng of mismated womanhood; lastly of the daughter of a woman who had rebelled against her lot; the nameless child of Alexandrine Nikitenko, who, filled as she was with the vivid life of her passionate heritage, was about to be shrouded away from the world she loved in the coif and robe of the cloistered nun. Gentle women: pure men; God’s world! Why are the two first so unfitted for the last? To God we apply the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. If these attributes be true, whence the evil

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that rules the world?—Is our God a demon? It is the logical inference.

To-day, for the hundredth time, Ivan cast away his defences of sarcasm, mockery, sophistry, and faced that question that has gone unanswered from generation to generation. As he meditated, his face lost its recently acquired harshness; his deep eyes grew sadder even than their wont; the look of a vast, ineffaceable weariness settled upon him. With face uplifted he continued to play, drifting through his own many forms of that unanswered question into final silence. Then, rising, he passed, a little unsteadily, into the inner room, and ate once more of the thick black paste in its golden tube.

Twilight had now long since merged into darkness. In the work-room Ivan lighted two lamps, and then, going to the fireplace, which he had here substituted for the traditional stove, and wherein a low fire burned, he threw on half a dozen blocks of peat. Then, turning to the high bookcase near at hand, he drew down, with fumbling hands, the sixteen red-leather books that constituted his journal and newly-written memoirs. Standing there, he read certain passages of this transcription of his mental life. Finally, with a straightening of his figure, he took the books one by one, tore off the covers, and stuffed the closely written sheets into the flames. Afterwards, like one in a daze, he returned to the piano.

It was his own, strange "Invocation to Death" to which his half-numbed fingers turned. The sound of the notes reached his ears as if from a great distance. Also, he was conscious of a feeling of nausea which told him that the fatal narcotic was working, powerfully. After a time, his fingers fell from the keys. Out of the enclosing mists he heard a voice calling: the clear, sweet voice of one distant, but coming nearer. It was the voice of Sophia, his mother.

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His face was uplifted, and he smiled as he echoed her words:

“Rest thee, Rest thee, thou God!”

With some difficulty he rose to his feet, and stumbled, heavily, into the inner room, where Aphrodite gleamed through her incense cloud. Here, with the air of one tired unto death, he sank down upon the leathern couch. And so the heavy eyelids closed over his weary, weary eyes.

EPILOGUE

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AN hour went by. The form upon the couch had neither moved nor given any sign of life; yet body and soul still held together. The mind was only sunk into a stupor of complete unconsciousness. When it was that the change began, none could have determined. After a few moments of a faintly visible fluttering of the breath, a wider parting of the lips, the feeble movement of a finger, Ivan's eyes suddenly flew wide open, his jaw relaxed and dropped. He was immediately sensible that all the heaviness of the opiate had passed from him; and that his being was possessed by a singular lightness and freedom. Then he perceived that, at his side, in close contact, indeed, with his new self, was his mother: tenderness incarnate, as of old, yet with undoubted anxiety about her.

"Smile for me, mother! Welcome me home!" he cried; filled now with a deep, expanding joy, wholly new and wonderful.

Sophia, looking down upon him, smiled, indeed, but pitifully, and with less of joy than of anxiety in her gentle look. Starting back from this, he turned to look about him, and found himself surrounded by shadow-shapes of many that he had known of old: Madame Dravikine, Nicholas, Zaremba, and old Sóssha: ay, even pallid Joseph, too, lurking behind a little group of brethren of the spirit: in life unknown; in death beloved. There was Mozart the beautiful; Beethoven,

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of lion-mien; Schumann, Schubert, Wagner the tempestuous, and the melancholy Pole. But none of them approached him closely, yearn as he might for welcome from them, his familiars. Nor did Sophia's sweet seriousness brighten.

"Mother, what is it?" he whispered. "Why are we waiting?"

"For a decision, Ivan. You have come to us before your time."

"But not without reason," he answered, quietly, with a dignity that seemed to her adequate. "There is a question I have died to ask."

"It shall be heard, then," said a voice: a voice inexplicable; resonant; divine.

Immediately Sophia and all the silent throng melted away. Ivan, no longer bound to the empty shell upon the couch, prostrated himself, instinctively, before the figure that appeared, framed in the oaken doorway of the outer room: the figure of a man white-robed, whose face, luminous and gently strong, was turned to him in tranquil majesty.

"Ask thy question, O Mortal," repeated the Christ-voice.

So Ivan, lifting his head, replied: "I came to ask it; being unable longer to reconcile myself to a life inconsistent with all logic.

"O King! Tell me how it is that a world, God-conceived, therefore inevitably perfect, became corrupt, filled with, and governed by, evil? wherein great burdens are borne by the good; and wickedness, vice, injustice, flourish unrebuked and unpunished. Whence comes this evil, and why?"

The question was spoken bravely and unfalteringly, for Ivan could perceive no sign of displeasure in the thoughtful countenance of the Man Divine. There was an impressive pause; and Ivan had his answer.

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"You have demanded a knowledge that is far beyond your present mortal understanding. But be assured that he who asks this question shall receive, in due time, its answer.—Yet know you so little of divine law that you desire truth without a struggle to gain it? that you demand the most priceless boon of creation as a favor, thinking to give naught in return? Nay, more: you have broken a law written at creation in the heart of every man; and thus, by the destruction of your earthly fetters, have sought a good end by evil means. This, then, shall be my judgment of your sin: In the punishment for your act of suicide, you shall obtain the truth, the knowledge, that you have died to seek.

"And let this be your appointed task, whereby you may reach that season of rest given each soul in the intervals between its experiences: Take first four years among your fellows here. Then return to the world of mortals where, in mortal guise, yet not in true confinement within the bounds of the flesh, you shall find a path appointed you to travel. There shall you cross the lives of two women, both of whom shall be known to you: the secrets of their hearts and souls laid bare to your transmortal mind. To these twain, dwellers in the provinces of good and of evil, you shall seek to give what aid your wisdom can devise for them. And in that attempt—the attempt to swerve them from the paths dictated by their own temperaments, you shall learn the reason for the ills you deprecate.—I have spoken. Obey the word; and in this labor find thy reward."

"Master, I will obey!—But—the four years—"

The trembling question halted; for, heeding his voice no longer, the Divine Figure passed beyond sight. And presently Ivan, lost in new meditation, perceived that he was floating softly upward, through space. About him, close as in his long-past babyhood, were clasped

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his mother's arms; which drew him at last into that peace that passeth understanding.

It was nine o'clock when the little household of Maidonovo was thrown into a ferment over the unexpected arrival of Princess Féodoreff, who came without either luggage or maid. After she had entered the little library, Piotr and young Ivan held a hurried conference in the hall, the question of which the Princess herself speedily solved. Coming out of the room, she bade the young man conduct her, without ceremony, to the retreat of her ogre.

Five minutes later she ceased to bruise her knuckles upon that locked, unyielding door.—What in the world was Ivan about?—Never, truly, had man slept through such noise as this!—And Ivan's sleep was notably light!

With a chill of premonition, she ran down the hall to call the men.

When at last Piotr, young Ivan, and Makár, working in a frenzy of dread, had torn the door from its hinges, Nathalie passed through, alone, into that inner room over which Ivan reigned no longer. She was the first to look upon his dead face, illumined by the candlelight—and by something more. It was also she—the one great love of his loveless life—who closed, at last, those staring, questioning eyes.



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